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Iran frees two Jordanians held since Iran-Iraq war

AMMAN (AFP) — Iran handed over two Jordanians imprisoned during the Iran-Iraq war to Crown Prince Hassan in Tehran Wednesday, a high Jordanian official told AFP. The two prisoners, Khaled Ali Salem and Nader Hassan Al Subaihi, were captured by the Iranian army while fighting for Iraq, the official said. The two prisoners are due to return to Amman accompanied by the Crown Prince. Diplomatic relations between Jordan and Iran were re-established in January 1991 after a 10-year suspension. Since then, their relations have gone through unstable periods, such as in 1994 when Jordan demanded that Tehran reduce the number of its diplomatic employees in Amman. However, ties between the two countries improved in 1997 when Iran reinstated a commercial agreement with Jordan suspended by the Iranian government in September 1996.

UNIFIL position bombed in southern Lebanon

NAQOURA (AFP) — A United Nations Interim Forces In Lebanon (UNIFIL) post under construction in south Lebanon has been blown up, the peacekeeping force said Wednesday. The Monday night attack, which did not inflict casualties, was the first time a post of the nine-nation force was "deliberately blown up," it said in a statement. The 4,500 soldiers of UNIFIL were deployed in the area after Israel's first invasion of Lebanon in 1978. "Unknown elements" Monday night blew up a UNIFIL post of the Nepalese battalion which was still under construction near the village of Yater, at the edge of the Israeli-occupied border zone of south Lebanon, the statement said. "UNIFIL condemns this criminal action which targeted a position whose only function was to give added protection to the people of the area," it said.

Crown Prince calls on conference to launch Islamic conflict centre

'Israeli government sees peace as an opportunity to annex and Judaise Jerusalem, build settlements and maintain supremacy'

By Abdullah Hasanat in Tehran

HIS ROYAL Highness Crown Prince Hassan on Wednesday called on Muslim leaders to establish a conflict resolution centre to help prevent conflicts among their countries from developing into wars.

"We call for the establishment of an Islamic centre for conflict resolution; one that enjoys the support and recognition of all in order to enable it to preempt conflicts and work on solving them if they occur," the Crown Prince told Muslim leaders from 55 countries meeting in Tehran.

"The bare minimum of the required effort at this stage is to adopt a code of conduct" to ensure that inter-Muslim relations are based on "respect for the particularities of each of our countries, their territorial integrity and national sovereignty," Prince Hassan said at the second day of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) summit in the Iranian capital.

To illustrate his point, the Crown Prince reminded his audience that inter-Muslim conflicts have in the past 50 years "resulted in alarming figures in terms of victims, displaced persons and refugees."

These conflicts, he added, "compelled us (Muslims) to purchase arms which some of us use against others among us."

Implicitly criticising the West and other world powers, the Crown Prince observed, that they view the Middle East region in general and the Gulf in particular "mainly through oil, weapons and strategic interests."

"The time has come to transcend the effects of destructive wars in the Gulf area," the Crown Prince told the Muslim leaders who included representatives of the countries that took part in the eight-year Iran-Iraq war and the war to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi occupation in 1991.

He called on them to start a series of confidence-building measures "such as releasing all prisoners of war," an allusion to Iraqi PoWs in Iran and Iranian and Kuwaiti prisoners in Iraq.

Turning to the issue of terrorism, the Crown Prince urged the Muslim leaders to assert their "rejection and condemnation of terrorism, regardless of its perpetrators and geographic location."

He said that Islam has become the target of vicious campaigns that link the Muslim World to terrorism and that Islamophobia has become a phenomenon that Muslims need to reverse through dialogue.

"It is painful that the world does not realise that Muslims, more than anybody else, are killed as a result of terrorism."

On the peace front, the Crown Prince told the Muslim delegates that the Israeli government sees the peace process as "an opportunity to annex land, Judaise Jerusalem, build settlements and maintain military, economic and technological supremacy, as well as monopolising

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Crown Prince Hassan waits for his car outside the conference hall of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) summit Wednesday, in Tehran's freezing cold weather. Torrential rain followed by a carpet of snow tumbled on Tehran early in the day, causing flooding and electrical problems at the brand new conference hall where leaders from the 55 OIC- member states are attending the summit (AFP photo)

Prince Hassan meets Khatami paving way for new chapter in bilateral ties

TEHRAN (J.T.) — Jordanian officials accompanying His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan to the 8th Islamic summit that ends here today expressed satisfaction at the results of the conference itself and the warming of Jordanian-Iranian relations.

According to the officials, a meeting between Crown Prince Hassan and Iranian President Mohammad Khatami on Tuesday paved the way for a new chapter in relations between the two countries after years of estrangement.

In other meetings between officials from both countries, the Iranians were committed to improving ties at all levels, Foreign Minister Fayez Tarawneh told the Jordan Times.

Meanwhile, Dr. Tarawneh and other foreign ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) were busy last night putting the final touches on the summit's resolutions and a "Tehran Declaration."

The declaration, according to Dr. Tarawneh, will be a pledge by Muslim nations to solve their problems peacefully without resort to war. It also sets a mechanism for that purpose, he said.

The declaration is seen by observers here as an Iranian assurance that it will not interfere in other countries' affairs and that it will settle its conflicts with its neighbours, especially the one

(Continued on page 2)

Saudi-Iranian warmth first sign of Iran's success at summit

TEHRAN (AP) — The leaders of Iran and Saudi Arabia, the two most influential nations in the Muslim World, have opened the way to end nearly two decades of hostility in the first tangible result of Iran's campaign to use an Islamic summit to break its isolation.

The peacemaking meeting Tuesday between Crown Prince Abdullah and Iran's spiritual leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, came before a flurry of meetings Wednesday between Iranian officials and leaders of Muslim countries attending the three-day summit of the Organisation of Islamic Conference.

On the summit's second day, leaders met in closed session throughout the morning to debate some of the most divisive issues in the region: The U.S.-backed Middle East peace process, Afghanistan, Iraq and Turkey's military co-operation with Israel.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat urged Muslim leaders to stop Israel from consolidating its rule over Jerusalem, a city Muslims consider holy, and declared the peace process was in shambles.

"It has reached a dead end on all Arab negotiation tracks," he said in a speech that was made available to reporters. "This is because of the Israeli policies and positions which reject the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace."

The peace process has proved one of the most explosive issues at the conference. Iran has long fashioned itself as a leading opponent of the negotiations, which Ayatollah Khamenei described in opening the summit as "unjust, arrogant, contemptuous and, finally, illogical."

Many Arab countries, however, still back the peace process, although they are increasingly frustrated with what they see as Israel's attempt to undermine agreements. Some Arab delegates expressed unhappiness with the tone of Ayatollah Khamenei's criticism.

The summit, which ends Thursday, drew 28 heads of state, prime ministers and crown princes, many of them making their first trip to a country they had feared since the 1979 revolution.

Iran has used the summit to arrange a series of meetings among Ayatollah Khamenei, President Mohammad Khatami and Muslim leaders from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Turkey and Malaysia.

(Continued on page 2)

Palestinians hold historic census in occupied territories

ABU DIS (AFP) — Palestinians launched a historic "nation building" census in the occupied territories Wednesday as Israel hurriedly passed a new law to bar the operation from being carried out in Arab east Jerusalem.

Some 3,000 field workers fanned out across the West Bank and Gaza Strip for the door-to-door survey that marked the first official census of Arab residents of the territories since they were occupied by Israel 30 years ago.

"This is a historic act because it's the first time the Palestinians have counted themselves. All previous census were done by occupying powers," said a Palestinian National Authority (PNA) official overseeing the count in this village just outside Jerusalem.

"This is a way to confirm our presence and to build our nation," said the official, who like most involved in the project asked not to be identified.

A new law against the census was rushed through the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, Wednesday to prevent census-takers from carrying out a head-count in Arab east Jerusalem — an operation Israel sees as a challenge to its sovereignty over the city.

Thirty-five of the 120 members of the Knesset voted in favour of the legislation while 22 voted against it.

The legislation will have to be approved in two more readings to become law, a move expected to take place in the next few hours.

At the last minute, the government of Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu decided to link the law to a vote of confidence, leading to the abstention of most members of the opposition, who had been ready to vote in favour.

Israeli police said they had detained a census-taker after questioning her as she worked in the Al Ram neighbourhood of Arab east Jerusalem.

Meanwhile, other field workers continued collecting short questionnaires distributed two weeks earlier asking the identities and ages of household members.

Writing in large ledgers, the counters then posed 78 questions concerning the economic and social situation of the family, including if their homes were connected to public electricity, water and sewage services, education and employment and what appliances the household owned.

"This information will be used for future planning, to determine infrastructure needs, school and hospital requirements, etc.," an official said.

Some residents expressed concern the requested information could be used against them, either for tax purposes concerning household belongings or more seriously by Israeli authorities who routinely revoke Jerusalem residency permits from Palestinians forced by housing shortages to live outside the city.

"Some people are afraid to participate, either because they have Jerusalem IDs or because of taxes. But I think this is a very good thing and most people will participate," Amal Mahmoud of Abu Dis told AFP.

Preliminary results from the count, due to last two weeks, were to be released January 4.

The census official in Abu Dis said the count would be taken discreetly in the Arab city regardless of Israeli desires.

"There is a committee in Jerusalem concerned with the census. The PNA doesn't want to do this openly and create a conflict, but we feel there is no legal or practical way for them to stop us," he said.

Current estimates put the population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip at about 2.3 million, while 180,000 Palestinians live in Arab east Jerusalem.

Since 1967, around 160,000 Jews have settled in Arab east Jerusalem.

Israel occupied Arab east Jerusalem in 1967 and they claim it to be their eternal capital but the Palestinians insist that on the sector as their future capital.

Hafez presents '98 draft budget to Lower House

AMMAN (J.T.) — The government Wednesday presented to Parliament the Kingdom's 1998 fiscal budget which amounts to JD1,950 million with total expenditures estimated at JD1,870 million and a deficit estimated at JD37 million.

Minister of Finance Suleiman Hafez, who presented the draft budget to be debated by the Lower House and the Senate, said the budget reflects continued economic growth and further strides towards attaining self-sufficiency and self dependence.

He said that the economic restructuring programme and the reforms have been instrumental in helping the country to deal with imbalances and pursue efforts towards achieving sustainable socio-economic development, stability in the exchange rates of the Jordanian dinar and accumulation of foreign currency reserves.

Mr. Hafez said that the deficit in 1997 has been reduced, economic growth was higher and the gap in the balance of trade was narrowing.

The minister said that the deficit was within targets set by the International Monetary Fund which is supervising the Kingdom's economic reforms programme introduced in 1989.

Following are the main points in the draft budget:

1. Revenues, including the grants and foreign aid for 1998, are estimated at JD1,950 million, a 5.7 per cent over the re-estimates for fiscal 1997. Of these, local revenues are estimated at JD1,704.3 million, a 7.2 per cent over the 1997 re-estimates.

Local revenues expected in 1998 will cover current expenditure in addition to 44.9 per cent of the capital expenditure.

2. Expenditure in 1998 is expected to reach JD1,987 million, a 7.6 per cent over the expenditure estimates in 1997. Of this sum, JD1,565 million will be current expenditure and JD422 million will be capital expenditure.

3. Deficit in the 1998 fiscal budget after taking grants and aid into consideration is estimated at JD37 million.

Expected economic indicators for 1998:-

1. Growth in the gross domestic product (GDP) at current prices is estimated at six per cent

2. Deficit in the 1998 budget is expected to account for 3.2 per cent of the gross

(Continued on page 2)

In retaliation to executions

Jordan expels 7 Iraqi diplomats, recalls chief of mission in Baghdad

By Rana Sabbagh
Jordan Times Chief Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan on Wednesday ordered the expulsion of seven Iraqi diplomats in retaliation for Baghdad's execution of four Jordanians on charges of smuggling JD620 in car spare parts out of Iraq.

Deputy Prime Minister and Acting Foreign Minister Jawad Anani said he summoned Mr. Nouri Al Weiss, Iraq's envoy to Jordan, and urged him to help save the life of Ammar Ghaleb Shehabeddine — a fifth Jordanian awaiting execution in Baghdad on smuggling charges. But he gave no further details.

Dr. Anani "demanded the departure of seven Iraqi diplomats accredited to Jordan within a week and handed him a protest letter "on the execution of the four citizens...despite mediation efforts and contacts exerted by the Jordanian government at the highest level in order to help commute these unjust sentences," Petra said.

Iraq has some 15 diplomats at its mission in Amman, officials said.

Dr. Anani said he "used clear and unambiguous language with the envoy, telling him "it was imperative for the Iraqi authorities to save the life of the fifth Jordanian citizen.." He said Mr. Al Weiss informed him that he had contacted Baghdad on the case but that the issue needed more follow-up.

Amman, which has not named an ambassador to Baghdad since the term of former envoy Bassam Qaqish expired in August, asked its charges d'affaires Adel Sweidan, running a team of six diplomats, to return home for consultations, officials said.

Officials and diplomats said the executions were a setback to recently improved bilateral ties which hit their lowest point after Jordan gave asylum to top Iraqi defectors in 1995 and began calling for democratic change in Baghdad.

But they said they did not expect Jordan to take

(Continued on page 2)

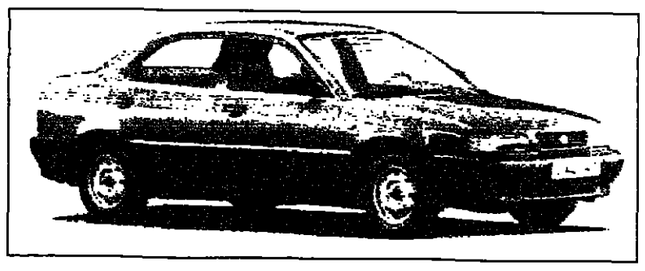


Undated handout photo of Jordaninan Rizq Bishara Rizq, 32, who was executed in Iraq on Monday along with three other Jordanians for smuggling car spare parts worth $850 (See separate story on page 3) (photo by Youssef 'Allan)

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Jordan Times

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Syrian president meets Arafat in Tehran — report

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Syrian President Hafez Al Assad held talks Wednesday in Tehran with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat on the sidelines of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) summit, the official Syrian news agency SANA said.

It was the first meeting between the two men since talks in Damascus in July, 1996.

President Assad and President Arafat discussed issues raised during the ongoing eighth OIC summit as well as developments in the Middle East peace process, the agency said.

Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Sharaa also took part in the meeting.

Relations between the Palestinian mainstream and Damascus have been rocky since the 1993 Israeli-Palestinian accords.

Israelis, Palestinians seek progress before end of week

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Top Israeli and Palestinian negotiators said Wednesday they would push to reach a breakthrough on implementing long-delayed Israeli commitments under interim peace accords before the end of this week.

Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy and Palestinian National Authority (PNA) number two Mahmoud Abbas met in a Jerusalem hotel with their main negotiators and announced afterwards they would accelerate efforts in committees working on the interim issues.

The move to reach some progress on the interim commitments comes amid stepped-up U.S. pressure on Israel to go ahead with a promised army withdrawal in the West Bank which the Palestinians have demanded to break the 10-month deadlock in the peace process.

Mr. Levy said the committees, which have been working since early October, "will start tomorrow to work intensively over the coming three days, during which we hope to see some progress."

"We agreed to concentrate our efforts so that this coming week does not end without some positive results," Mr. Abbas said.

The committees will meet to work out the opening of a Palestinian airport in the Gaza Strip and of industrial zones on the Israeli-Gaza border, as well as the creation of "safe passages" between the West Bank and Gaza and security issues.

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright is due to meet Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu on Dec. 17, following talks last weekend in which she pressed him to go ahead with a withdrawal and increase the amount of land to be handed over to Palestinian rule.

She will hold separate talks the same day with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, who she also met over the weekend.

Mr. Netanyahu shrugged off pressure from the U.S. and the Palestinians, saying it would not force him to make a quick deal on the long-overdue pullout, which Israel promised in the interim peace accords.

"Dictates and outside pressure will be fruitless. They will not change our decisions concerning the extent of a military redeployment or the date," Mr. Netanyahu said Tuesday.

Mr. Netanyahu also wants to delay any further withdrawal for five months to test the Palestinians' resolve to crack down on Islamist activists responsible for deadly anti-Israeli attacks.

Prince Hassan meets Khatami paving way for new chapter in bilateral ties

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with the United Arab Emirates over the Tunb islands, peacefully.

The observers say the declaration will also strengthen the hand of President Khatami who is battling conservatives and radicals at home.

In this spirit, the conference is seeking to end the tensions between Syria and Turkey by appointing a committee to mediate between the two. In one of the resolutions Syria is demanding that Turkey be censured for its military ties with Israel, while Turkey wants the summit to urge Syria to end its support for the Kurdish rebel movement, the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK).

On the Iraq crisis the summit is also engaged in finding proper language to satisfy Iraq and Kuwait. Iraq insists that Muslim countries lift the boycott imposed on it, while Kuwait demands the release of its prisoners, officials said.

Crown Prince calls on conference to launch Islamic conflict centre

(Continued from page 1)

natural resources and imposing its hegemony over the entire Middle East.

"Jordan believes in a comprehensive and lasting peace based on justice and international legitimacy" and "we will continue to call for this peace until it is realised and Israel withdraws from all the occupied Arab territories in Palestine, the Golan Heights and south Lebanon," the Crown Prince said.

Jerusalem, the Crown Prince said, deserves special care and attention from Muslim leaders.

"We in Jordan, under the leadership of His Majesty King Hussein, have done our utmost to defend Jerusalem and restore its rich sites."

Turning to the question of Iraq, the Crown Prince observed that the international community that promotes globalisation and economic openness is the same community that imposes sanctions on 22 million Iraqis exposing them to hunger and diseases due to lack of food and medicine.

"We have to reject collective punishment and the siege against entire countries," he said.

The Crown Prince also urged the leaders to establish an "effective tool to combat poverty and its causes."

"I call upon this august conference to adopt practical measures needed to establish an International Zakat Fund," Prince Hassan said.

Hafez presents '98 draft budget to Lower House

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domestic product

3. Prices are expected to rise by three per cent in general.

4. The deficit in the balance of trade in 1998 is expected to drop by 29 per cent of the gross domestic product as a result of increases in exports

5. A surplus in the services balance is expected to grow by 23 per cent

6. The current expenditure deficit in 1998 is expected to drop by 1.7 per cent of the gross domestic product

Main economic indicators for 1997 and for 1998

First : Gross domestic product (GDP)

Initial results indicate that the GDP will grow this year by 5.3 per cent at current prices compared to 5.2 in 1996.

Some sectors are expected to achieve a real growth in 1997. For instance the transport and telecommunications sectors is likely to register a growth of 10 per cent, while social services, could record about seven per cent. Water, electricity, insurance, real estates and services sectors are expected to grow by five per cent this year also.

Initial indicators about domestic savings show that this year they will rise by 12.6 per cent (of GDP) compared to 12.1 per cent in 1996.

As for investments in 1997, there are indicators they will be the same as 1996, accounting for 33 per cent of GDP. Of these, the private sector investments will account for 82.4 per cent compared to 81.4 per cent in 1996.

Second: General level of prices

The price index over the past 11 months of this year compared with the same period of 1996 shows that relative increases of prices will not exceed 2.7 per cent. However, the general index of prices from now and until the end of the year could rise to three per cent compared to 6.5 per cent by the end of 1996.

Third: Unemployment and poverty

Despite the successive governments' efforts to deal with unemployment and poverty problems, further action is required. According to latest surveys about the workforce, unemployment and income in Jordan, as conducted by the Department of Statistics last October, unemployment stands at 15.1 per cent among population of 15 years of age and above.

But there is urgent need for addressing poverty and this is given priority by the government in the implementation of the 1998-2002 five year economic plan. The government believes the poverty issue is connected to and can be addressed through a comprehensive development plan. However the government realises that it has to confront this issue in the short and medium terms through:- a) rehabilitating poor areas through investments in them and through modernising the infrastructure services, b) through training of human resources and improving their skill to earn a living and c) by raising the necessary funds through the various organisations to finance training and rehabilitation projects and through providing direct financial aid to the needy families.

Consequently, the government is planning to :

1. Implement the social security package plan to enable the needy to increase production and provide the necessary infrastructure and services. This entails expanding the activities of the National Aid Fund (NAF). This also entails improving infrastructure services of 313 municipalities, 13 refugee camps, 12 population settlements.

Further more the plan entails training persons to carry out income generating projects. The government has allocated JD6 million in the draft budget of 1998 as an initial contribution from the treasury but it is seeking 20 million marks as a grant from the German government and a soft loan of $30 million from the World Bank for this programme.

2. Aid provided by the NAF and loans offered by the Employment and Development Fund (EDF) have already contributed to alleviating poverty and reducing the rate of unemployment. The NAF provided JD65.4 million as recurrent aid since 1991. JD11 million in financing vocational training programmes for the needy. A total of 100,000 persons have so far benefited from this aid.

Fourth: Balance of payments

The initial indicators show that the balance of payment in 1997 has improved and it is expected to show that it stands at JD1726 million in 1997, registering a decline in the deficit compared to the 1996 figures. This is the result of increased exports (around seven per cent) over the 1996 figures and a modest increase in imports by 2.1 per cent over the 1996 figures.

The balance of services is expected to show 2.2 per cent increase in 1997 compared to 1996. This is largely due to increases in the expatriates transfers which are expected to rise by 5.9 per cent while income from tourism is expected to rise by 3.6 per cent over the 1996 figures.

As a result of improvement in the balance of trade and balance of services, Jordan expects a drop in the deficit of current expenditure from 3.1 per cent in 1996 to 1.7 per cent in 1997.

The overall improvement in the balance of payments is expected to increase the accumulation of foreign currency reserves to reach $1.6 billion by the end of 1997.

The government has allocated around JD250 million for debt servicing next year as the total foreign debt has reached $6.8 billion.

Mr. Hafez stressed that it was essential that public expenditure be kept on tight leash to ensure that the reforms stay on track.

According to a Reuters report, the Kingdom was told by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank that it must slash public expenditures and reduce a bloated public sector if its structural reforms are to progress.

But government spending continues to be high on a per capita basis and major political and social pressures hamper efforts to cut the civil service, whose salaries absorb a major chunk of state expenditure.

Foreign aid allocations were forecast at JD299 million — of which JD196 million would be grants. The aid is split between covering the budget shortfall and domestic and foreign debt servicing, Mr. Hafez said.

Saudi-Iranian warmth first sign of Iran's success at summit

(Continued from page 1)

Most striking were the separate meetings between Prince Abdullah and the Iranian leaders.

"The government of Iran has the will to expand ties with Saudi Arabia in different fields," official Tehran Radio quoted Ayatollah Khamenei as telling Prince Abdullah during an hour-long meeting Tuesday.

The statement is an unprecedented expression of friendliness by an Iranian spiritual leader. Ayatollah Khamenei's predecessor, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini had even called for bringing down the ruling family of Saudi Arabia. A rapprochement is all the more significant because Saudi Arabia and Iran are seen as the custodians of the Sunni and Shia sects of Islam.

Prince Abdullah, too, said he saw the potential for better ties.

"We should not look to the past," he was quoted as saying.

One of the more lasting results of the summit may be Iran's improvement of ties with longwary Gulf neighbours, who have feared Iran's export of its Islamic revolution and bankrolled neighbouring Iraq during its 1980-88 war with Iran.

Most Gulf states are close U.S. allies, and the warmer relations will likely undo Washington's attempt to isolate Iran's government, which it believes is a leading sponsor of terrorism.

As the delegates met in the spacious conference centre at the foot of the snow-dusted mountains, a rainstorm lashed Tehran, snarling traffic before turning into snow.

Jordan expels 7 Iraqi diplomats, recalls chief of mission in Baghdad

(Continued from page 1)

further moves to show its displeasure, at least for now.

The two countries, former allies and still close trading partners, exchange oil and goods worth hundreds of millions of dollars under an annual trade protocol.

On the streets, ordinary Jordanians expressed shock, dismay and anger at the killings of 37-year-old trader Walid Nuseirat, Rizq Bshara Rizq, 32 and brothers Said, 35, a taxi driver and Salah al-Dawji, 32 , a painter.

Many said Jordan, which was ostracised by the West because of its perceived tilt towards Baghdad following its August invasion of Kuwait in 1990, did not deserve such a treatment.

They contrasted Iraq's official behaviour towards Jordanians in Iraq with the status of over 40,000 Iraqis living and working in Jordan who are being treated well.

News of the executions sparked an outcry in the newly-elected Lower House of Parliament, which held an ordinary meeting on Tuesday and the Royally-appointed Upper House, which issued a tough-worded statement condemning the Iraqi move.

Deputies said they were outraged by the gross punishment inflicted on the four men. Deputy Deifallah Ka'abar even asked the government to ban the travel of all Jordanians to Iraq.

His call rekindled bitter memories of the late 1970s when Jordan barred all its citizens from going to Iraq and downgraded diplomatic ties after Iraq executed a Jordanian student it accused of working for Jordanian security.

However, ties gradually improved after His Majesty King Hussein sided with Iraq in its 1980-1988 war with Iran and reached a peak in 1990.

Acting Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour and Interior Minister Nathir Rashid tried to calm the temper of deputies, who demanded a special session to discuss the killings and Jordanian efforts to prevent them.

Dr. Ensour complained that the Jordanian government and embassy in Iraq tried their utmost to have the sentences commuted and to obtain details of legal charges pressed against the four.

He said that King Hussein himself had been in touch "day and night" through the Royal Court over the issue, but that information had been scant. Iraq has remained tight-lipped on the executions.

"The painful thing about this matter is that the four were killed in cold blood...the amount of goods they were accused of smuggling did not merit such a move," Mr. Rashid said.

"There are other detainees in Iraq, which is another tragedy. We have tried through all means to define their numbers and why they are held. But there has been no cooperation at all," he said.

Officials said over 100 Jordanian prisoners were serving their sentences in jails across the country. The figure excluded detainees held at Iraqi security centres.

Grieved relatives of the four urged King Hussein to help them retrieve the corpses to their homeland.

A senior government official told the Jordan Times the four men were seized in January 1996 for alleged smuggling of vehicle spare parts from sanctions-hit Iraq and were released on bail in March. "The confiscated goods were sold at an auction for a little over JD 500," he said.

"In April, they were called back to stand trial and in September they were sentenced to death."

Car parts and many other goods are in short supply in Iraq, which has been under U.N. sanctions since 1990.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION
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PROGRAMME TWO

Thursday Programmes
14:10 "The World of Peter Rabit"
14:30 My Little Fairy Tale
15:00 America's Funniest People
15:30 He Shoots, He Scores
16:00....National Geographic
16:30 The Prince and the Pauper
17:00 French Programmes
19:00 News in French
19:15 French Progammes
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Trivial Pursuit
20:00 The Parenthood
20:30 Lois and Clark
21:10 Oprah Winfrey Show
22:00 News in English
22:30 Feature Film: "Without Her Consent"
23:59 Music Show

Friday Programmes
14:10 The Adventures of Teddy Ruxpin
14:30 The New Fred and Barney Show
15:00 Wishbone
15:30 Lucky Luke
16:00 Family Matters
16:20 Doc. — Natural Wonders of Europe
17:00 French Programmes
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Doc. — Life on the Internet
20:00 Comedy — Are You Being Served
20:30 Brisco County
21:10 Doc. — Horizon
22:00 News in English
22:30 Mini-series
23:15 Feature Film: "Duel of Hearts"

PRAYER TIMES

04:58 Fajr
06:20....(Sunrise) Duha
11:29....Dhuhr
14:14....'Asr
16:37 Maghreb
17:59....'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifieh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 865897
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 688404
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932.
Church of Nazarene Tel. 675691.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Temperatures are expected to rise slightly during the weekend becoming around average, skies partly cloudy, and winds northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, skies will be partly-cloudy, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Amman 08/14
Aqaba 14/22
Deserts....06/17
Jordan Valley 13/20

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 12, Aqaba 21 Humidity readings: Amman 95 per cent, Aqaba 41 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Mukhles Mazzahrah 820425
Dr. Wissam Hzayyin 748563
Dr. Khalid Abdo 657129
Dr. Munther Al Qraini ..779959
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy....637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Najib pharmacy 847632
IRBID:
Dr. Ghazi Ta'amneh 250080
Al Quds pharmacy(—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Ziad Jghaitim 992991
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency ...199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 81381/32
Khalidi Maternity. ...644281/6
Akileh Maternity, ...642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Mnasher Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir, ...775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital 674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery ...865199
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital(09)990990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital(02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital(02)272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital(02)247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital(03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200 where it should always be verified.
Information on other flights are supplied on phone 08 (52700) or 08(53250).

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:25 Bombay (RJ)
09:00 Sanaa (RJ)
09:15 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:30 New Delhi (RJ)
10:05 Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
10:15 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
10:30 Colombo (RJ)
12:20 Kuala Lumpur (add) (RJ)
13:45 Beirut (RJ)
15:00 .. New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:55 London, Athens (RJ)
18:05 Kuwait (RJ)
18:55 Bangkok, Calcutta (RJ)
19:05 ..Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain (RJ)
21:30 Moscow (RJ)
22:50 Larnaca (RJ)
04:15 Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights
13:15 Riyadh (SV)
14:10 Shariqah (AH)
15:00 Doha (QR)
15:20 Muscat, Doha (GF)
16:00 Dubai (EK)
16:30 Rome (AZ)
20:00 Tel Aviv (MS)
20:40 Cairo (MS)
23:10 Istanbul (TK)
23:30 London, Beirut (BA)
23:35 Larnca (CY)

Royal Wings (RW)
(For Thursday and Friday)
07:45 Aqaba (RW)
09:05 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
09:50 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
17:20 Tel Aviv (RW)
18:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
21:20 Aqaba (RW)
22:50 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
10:00 Beirut (RJ)
10:30 ..Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain (RJ)
14:45 Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
15:30 Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
11:45 Moscow (RJ)
12:05 Kuwait (RJ)
12:15 London (RJ)
12:20 Athens, Paris (RJ)
19:35 Larnaca (RJ)
22:15 Jeddah (RJ)
23:00 Kuwait (RJ)
23:15 Cairo (RJ)
00:15 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
00:45 Kuala Lumpur (RJ)

Other Flights
00:35 Amsterdam (KL)
03:00 Athens (OA)
06:40 Beirut, London (BA)
08:00 Beirut (ME)
11:20 London (BA)
14:45 Riyadh (SV)
15:00 Algiers (AH)
15:55 Doha (QR)
16:20 Abu Dhabi, Doha (GF)
17:00 Muscat, Dubai (EK)
17:30 Rome (AZ)
21:20 Tel Aviv (LY)
21:40 Cairo (MS)

Royal Wings
(For Thursday and Friday)
06:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
08:15 Aqaba (RW)
09:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
16:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
17:55 Tel Aviv (RW)
20:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
21:50 Aqaba (RW)

Queen honours rural women for 'outstanding contributions'

AMMAN (J.T) — Her Majesty Queen Noor Wednesday presented the Women's World Summit Foundation's "1997 Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life" to Najwa Sha'sha'a in a ceremony at Deir Allah, according to a press release.

Queen Noor, as the honorary president of the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs (BPWC), also honoured six women for their "outstanding contributions to rural development."

The Queen, who is the former president and member of the International Steering Committee on the Economic Advancement of Rural Women (ISC), emphasised the importance of promoting the economic empowerment of rural women as a vital force for development, the statement continued.

Rural women, according to the Queen, produce 60-80 per cent of basic foodstuffs in sub-Sahara Africa and the Caribbean and meet 90 per cent of household water and fuel needs in Africa. The Queen added that about one-fourth of the female labour force in the Middle East is in agriculture and in some countries women make up nearly 50 per cent of the agricultural workforce.

She highlighted the significant impact rural women can have on the well-being of their families and their communities, adding that "with education, training, and income-generation opportunities, rural women can raise food production and meet their children's nutritional needs, teach them good health and environmental practices."

Mrs. Sha'sha'a outlined the difficulties that rural women face in the Jordan Valley in exercising their fundamental rights, particularly in their access to credit, land ownership, technology, and training. She added that rural women often find themselves having to shoulder the double burden of caring for their children and households while taking on a significant share in the family's farming and economic activities.

Each of the honoured rural women will have JD500 put in her name as credit at the Trust Fund at the Noor Al Hussein Foundation (NHF) to support them in developing their existing projects and help them initiate other income-generating schemes, according to the statement.

The NHF, in cooperation with the BPWC, will offer technical assistance and help in the management of their projects. The NHF initiated small business counselling in cooperation with the BPWC, which offers business advice and financial support for women entrepreneurs. The BPWC also has a legal consultative service office for women and an information and documentation centre for women's studies, the statement continued.

Later, Queen Noor was briefed on sites in Deir Alla where the Ministry of Water and the Jordan Valley Authority are planning to establish environmental and water development projects such as brackish water treatment plants for irrigation and hot water springs management.

The annual international "Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life" was founded by the Women's World Summit Foundation to honour "outstanding rural women and women's organisations around the world who exhibit exceptional creativity, courage and commitment in improving the quality of rural life and ending poverty in their communities."

Also attending the ceremony were a number of ministers, officials, and advisors, the press release concluded.



PRINCE MEETS WITH AMERICAN GENERAL: **HRH Prince Abdullah, commander of the Special Operations Forces, Wednesday briefs General Anthony Zinni, commander in chief of the U.S. Central Command, on the tasks and duties of the Special Operations Forces (Photo by Yousef 'Allan)**

Families of Jordanians executed in Iraq seek King's help in repatriating bodies

By Rana Husseini
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The families of three of the four Jordanian citizens executed Monday in Iraq sent a plea to His Majesty King Hussein to help them repatriate their sons' bodies.

Walid Nusseirat, 37, Riziq Bshara Riziq, 30, Sa'eed Yousef Doji, 35, and his younger brother Salah, 32, were executed Monday evening after being convicted by an Iraqi court of smuggling spare auto parts worth JD600.

Relatives of the Doji brothers, who were married to Iraqi nationals and resided there since 1988, Wednesday begged for the safe return of a third brother who has been missing in Iraq for the past week.

"My younger brother travelled to Iraq in late October to check on my detained brothers, and last week, we lost contact. We fear that something bad might have happened to him," said Ali Doji, 37.

The Doji family also demanded the safe return of the families of their brothers and their children.

"My brother Salah had four children, three of them handicapped, and we want them to return to Jordan so we can take care of them," Ali Doji told the Jordan Times.

According to the Doji family, their brothers, along with Mr. Nuseirat and Mr. Riziq, were apprehended by Iraqi authorities in January 1997 while they were on their way from Baghdad to Amman with spare auto parts in their possession.

The four were referred by the Iraqi authorities to a court which fined them two and a half million Iraqi dinars and ordered the seizure of the smuggled parts and Mr. Riziq's car.

The four were later released, Mr. Ali Doji maintained, and Mr. Riziq, who resided in Jordan, returned home.

"But shortly afterwards, the Iraqi authorities arrested my brothers, Mr. Nuseirat, and Mr. Riziq, who returned to Iraq to retrieve his car, and after a short retrial sentenced them all to death in October.

"My brother's [Walid's] blood is a debt on the Iraqi regime and government," said Munib Nuseirat.

The Doji and Nuseirat families said they do not believe that their sons' executions were politically motivated, adding that their brothers were only "making a living through a limited trade of goods."

On Monday, the Jordanian government recalled Adel Sweidan, the chargé d'affaires of the Jordanian embassy in Iraq, in protest and also said it was expelling seven Iraqi diplomats.

Government officials said a fifth Jordanian, Amar Ghaleb Shihabedin, may be executed soon, according to information from his family.

Court overturns citizen's extradition to Saudi Arabia

By Ahmad Kreishan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation has overturned a verdict by the Court of Appeals in Amman ordering that a Jordanian citizen, identified only as M.N.A, be extradited to Saudi Arabia to face embezzlement charges.

In its ruling, the Court of Cassation said Saudi Arabia has not yet ratified the Arab League agreement on extradition of criminals among Arab states.

The Court of Cassation noted that according to instructions by Minister of Justice Riad Shaka'a, only countries that have endorsed the agreement can extradite criminals to one another.

In its verdict, the Court of Appeals stated that the accused was involved in a criminal offence while in Saudi Arabia and the conditions for extradition conformed to the Arab League treaty.

The Court of Cassation, however, maintained that only Arab states that have endorsed the agreement can exchange prisoners only if they are wanted for murder, in accordance with the agreement's third article.

Furthermore, the court pointed out that the Arab League's treaty stipulates that in order to be extradited, a suspect should have been subjected to investigation and interrogation in the country requesting the extradition and the extradition request should clearly define these matters and specify the crime with which the suspect is charged.

According to the treaty, a suspect should also have been already convicted and have served at least two months in prison.

Since these conditions were not met, the court said it could only reject the extradition request and overturn the Court of Appeals' verdict.

House to debate vote of confidence in Majali's government Monday

By Fairouz Abu-Ghazaleh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Lower House of Parliament will start debating a vote of confidence sought by the government of Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali on Dec. 14.

The 80-seat House will decide whether to grant the Cabinet of Dr. Majali their vote of confidence after assessing the government's policy statement, which is based on the Speech from the Throne delivered by His Majesty King Hussein during the inauguration of the 13th Parliament on Nov. 29.

It is expected that obtaining the House's vote of confidence will be an easy task for the Cabinet, informed sources told the Arabic daily Al Arab Al Yawm, adding that around 60 deputies are expected to vote in favour of Dr. Majali.

During Wednesday's regular session, the House discussed six temporary laws passed by the government while the House was in recess, including the controversial Press and Publication Law and the revised Election Law. Both sparked an intense debate in the House.

Many deputies, angered by the Press and Publications Law and the restrictions it imposes, called for its rejection.

Hamadeh Fara'neh and Abdul Karim Doghmi rejected the law on the basis that they failed to see the urgency that the government claimed forced it to take its measures.

In September of this year, while Parliament was in recess, the Press and Publications Department issued an order suspending 13 publications after finding them in violation of Article 13 of the newly-amended law, which laid out new capital requirements for both weekly and daily newspapers.

"I ask the House to reject this law, which limits freedom of expression and the freedom of our citizens and journalists," said Mr. Fara'neh.

Acting Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour said the government had to take action concerning the matter of the press due to the low quality of the material published by some newspapers. He said he was only referring to "irresponsible, black newspapers," which infringed on the rights of public figures, citizens, and the community and not political papers.

He added that there is a nine-month period between each parliamentary session, and it is unfeasible to ask the government to freeze all legislation during that time.

After a lengthy discussion over whether the House should reject the law or pass it to the national guidance committee, 39 deputies out of the present 73 voted to pass the law to the concerned committee.

As for the revised Election Law, which was passed to the House's judiciary committee, Dr. Ensour said the government will present the promised "comprehensive and modern" draft of the new law as soon as soon as possible.

Local UNRWA staff stage second sit-in to press for better pay, working conditions

By Ghalia Alul
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) employees Wednesday staged another sit-in at the agency's headquarters here in protest against what they called UNRWA's failure to heed their demands for better working conditions and salary increases.

A group of 22 employees representing about 22,000 staff members in the agency's five areas of operation started an open sit-in following their annual meeting Tuesday.

During the meeting, the employees accused UNRWA of deliberately stalling by neglecting their most vital demands, which also include early retirement and compensation for termination of employment.

UNRWA staff committees this summer stepped-up their campaign against the agency after it decided to impose austerity measures due to lack of funds.

But when the cash-strapped U.N. organisation covered its budget deficit after receiving some $19 million in donations last September, it canceled part of the cutbacks.

Staff representatives decided to relaunched their campaign against UNRWA after "it failed to consider their demands during the past two months."

"We have been asking for the same things for two years, and the commissioner general promised to change the policy of salaries to be in accordance with the increase in the cost of living. But until now nothing happened," a staff representative told the Jordan Times Wednesday.

UNRWA workers said agency Commissioner General Peter Hansen, who they described as the "only decision maker," refused to meet with them, a move which prompted Tuesday's sit-in.

"Instead, the commissioner general sent his deputy, who ordered us to go back to work or face disciplinary measures," one employee said.

UNRWA employees sent an urgent message to U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan urging him to intervene in order to stop the "crisis" between the agency and its staff.

They also issued a statement in which they announced additional measures and called on Arab League Secretary General Ismat Abdul Majuid to intervene.

Speaking to reporters Wednesday after a meeting of the higher administrative committee, Mr. Hansen said the pledges of $126 million announced at last week's donors conference in New York, in addition to the $30 million contributed by the European Union, cover only half of the agency's 1998 budget of $314 million.

The agency is expecting more donations, because the fiscal year in some donor nations starts at the beginning of 1998.

"For the moment I have half of what I need, but my prime consideration will be to avoid any cuts in services. Our efforts must also go towards improvements in our programmes and activities," said Mr. Hansen.

Referring to demands for salary increases, Mr. Hansen said UNRWA staff earn 10 to 60 per cent more than the average pay in Jordan, Syria, or Lebanon.

However, he added: "I'm fully aware that there are problems and we would like to improve conditions for staff."

Mr. Hansen said all problems could be addressed as long as the rules and the authority of staff meetings are not violated.

Radio, television stations here to join worldwide children's broadcast

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordanian radio and television stations will broadcast the children's programme "Tune in to Kids" Friday, joining more than 2,000 radio and television stations in more than 170 countries around the world in celebrating the International Children's Broadcasting Day (ICBD).

The ICBD was first launched in 1992, when hundreds of broadcasting stations worldwide aired special programmes for and by children.

The ICBD aims to shed light on the problems encountered by children, identify their needs, sensitise the public to their problems and concerns, and find solutions for them. It also aims to highlight the important role the media can play in improving the situation of children and focusing on their rights to survival, protection, development, and participation.

Jordan Radio and Television Corporation will celebrate the ICBD in cooperation with the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF), which has been a driving force behind the ratification by almost all countries of the world of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

Jordan endorsed the CRC in 1991, committing itself to observing its provisions and articles. The CRC emphasises the right of every child to express his/her views and to participate in making decisions affecting their own lives and futures.

To mark this occasion, the Public Security Department, in cooperation with UNICEF, has released a special issue of the children's magazine, "The Little Policeman," focusing on the ICBM and CRC-related issues.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILMS

* "Bienvenido Mister Marshall" at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman on Thursday at 5:00 p.m.
* "Jospeh Bueys (1921-1986)" (in English with commentary in Arabic by Dr. Mazen Asfour) at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh on Thursday at 5:30 p.m.
* "A House Without a Christmas Tree" at the American Centre, Abdoun on Thursday at 5:00 p.m.

PLAY

* "The Moment" (Arabic) at the Royal Cultural Centre on Thursday at 10:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. (until Dec. 11).

CONCERT

* Classical Arabic music by Ali Hussein, Furat Qaddouri, and Anwar Kadhim at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh on Thursday at 7:00 p.m.

Women forced into 'protective custody' in prisons to save their lives

By Rana Husseini
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

Names and ages appearing in the story below have been changed to protect the identities of the inmates.

JWEIDEH — Kifah, a Jordanian mother of four serving a 15-year jail sentence after a court found her guilty of complicity with her brother in killing her husband, sat behind iron bars lamenting her fate.

She is one of several inmates incarcerated at the Jweideh Female Rehabilitation and Correction Centre (JFRCC), in "protective custody" or serving jail terms for offences ranging from theft, perjury, murder and premeditated murder to adultery.

"I regret killing my husband, but he used to beat me up and bring other women home," 32-year-old Kifah, clad in a dark blue prison uniform, told the Jordan Times.

"I asked him for a divorce several times during my 13-year marriage but he refused," explained the woman, who has already served four years of her sentence.

Kifah was originally sentenced to death, but the term was later commuted. Her brother was executed last year.

"I miss my children the most and what bothers me more is that I cannot see them. I know nothing about them other than that they are at a child care centre," she said.

Salam, 18, and Kifaya, 22, represent another example of inmates who are victims of family disputes or strict social traditions and are kept there on protective grounds.

Between 25 to 30 women are reportedly killed in Jordan every year in "crimes of honour," a practice condemned by many officials and human rights activists in the Kingdom and abroad.

Male relatives take the lives of these women for either their involvement or their suspected involvement in an affair with a man — largely a taboo in Jordan's conservative society, which links family honour to the behaviour of female relatives.

"We have around 40 women who are involved in cases of 'immoral behaviour' and are kept at our centre to protect their lives," said 1st Lt. Fathieh Majali, who heads the women section.

Salam said she was abused by her alcoholic father, who later abandoned her mother and nine brothers and sisters to marry another woman. Her uncle forced her to move with the rest of her family to the West Bank, a place she disliked.

"Because I could not live there and because I needed to find a job to support my family in a decent way, I escaped to Jordan and worked as a translator," she said in an interview, wearing her hair in a pony tail.

"My uncle discovered my whereabouts and tried to force me to return to the West Bank. And when I refused, he filed a complaint with the police, and I was brought here for protective custody," she said.

"I know that if I am released my uncle will kill me, even though I know I haven't done anything wrong...my only crime was that I wanted to live in Jordan," she said, tears swelling in her eyes.

She said she had already spent six months at the centre but does not know when she might gain her freedom.

"I am really happy because I learnt how to sew and I met other inmates, but I do not know when I will be released," she said.

Kifaya, detained seven months so far for alleged adultery, said she has three options — to remain in indefinite detention, to be released to an unknown destiny, or to be married off to a stranger.

"But once I am released, I plan to complete my studies and try to find a job," she said, adding that she was not afraid of being killed by any of her family members.

Lt. Majali said the JFRCC administration sometimes tries to find alternative solutions to the problems of administrative detainees by marrying them off to male visitors who come to the centre searching for a wife.

"Many men, whose wives have died, or who are old and are seeking a companion, visit our centre and we try to find the appropriate woman for them depending on their case and age," Lt. Majali said.

Women at the centre benefit from special programmes, including literacy and religious courses and textile weaving classes.

"Most of the women who are in protective custody respect the centre and its regulations," explained Lt. Majali.

"But what bothers them most is the feeling that they do not belong here. Unfortunately, there is not much we can do here other than encourage them to go on, because we are only an executive authority and we apply the law," she added.

However, Lt. Majali insisted the centre has never regarded any of its inmates as prisoners. "Instead, we look at them as victims of their circumstances and we try to compensate for what they have gone through in the past."

The centre, set up in 1986, is one of seven across the Kingdom. It houses male inmates and detainees in a separate section.

The women's division is divided into four sections, each with 20 bunk beds, a sports court, a dining hall, and a vocational training centre, said prison Director Lt. Colonel Hamdan Sa'aeideh. Inmates are divided into four groups according to their offences.

He said all prisoners are allowed two visitations a week and have access to health services, food, clothes, newspaper, television, radio, and a library.

Lt. Colonel Sa'aeideh said two social workers and a psychiatrist follow up on the cases of men and women detainees and each inmate receives JD10 per month from the Ministry of Social Development.

Historic Korean peace talks begin

GENEVA (AFP) — The four countries who fought in the 1950-53 Korean war began historic talks Tuesday to officially end the conflict as North Korea repeated its demand that the United States withdraw its troops from South Korea.

"As we had expected, North Korea demanded the withdrawal of U.S. troops stationed in South Korea," said a South Korean government official, referring to the some 37,000 U.S. soldiers stationed there.

Diplomats from South and North Korea, the United States and China are here for the two-day peace talks aimed at replacing the armistice that technically ended the war in 1953 but left the two Koreas divided by the world's most heavily-armed frontier.

Meanwhile in Washington, U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen rejected as "completely unacceptable" North Korean demands for the withdrawal of U.S. troops, and said Washington would hold high-level talks with Pyongyang only in consultation with Seoul.

"We are not going to have a policy of allowing North Korea to try to set up bilateral negotiations with the United States," Mr. Cohen said.

"We strongly believe that the role of U.S. forces is very vital in maintaining peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula, and in northeast Asia," he said. "So the future U.S. role will be closely consulted when such a thing as a reduction of tensions occurs in the future.

South Korean Defence Minister Kim Dong-Jin in Washington also said the U.S. troops would remain as long as there is a threat of war from the Stalinist state.

Despite North Korea's demands for the U.S. troop withdrawal, the South Korean official said the first day of talks were "constructive."

"The talks were constructive today and the atmosphere was good," he said after the talks adjourned for the day.

Delegates from the four countries are scheduled to meet for the second day of talks Wednesday starting at 10 a.m (0900 GMT).

The talks followed months of diplomatic wrangling after they were first proposed in April 1996 by South Korean President Kim Young-Sam and U.S. President Bill Clinton.

A U.S. spokesman for the United States said the Americans hoped to hold more rounds of these peace talks in the future, and that the four parties were expected to set the date for the next round.

In the talks Tuesday, all delegates of the four parties agreed that China would chair the next meeting, followed by the South Koreans and then the North Koreans.

The United States holds the chairmanship in these Geneva talks.

The South Korean official quoted the North Koreans as saying they were willing to hold dialogue with its arch-rival South Korea to discuss peace on the Korean Peninsula.

Pyongyang had in the past said that South Korea was in no position to discuss replacing the current truce with a peace treaty since Seoul was not a party to the armistice that ended the Korean conflict.

Meanwhile China, which went to North Korea's aid against the U.S.-led United Nations force in the Korean war, called for normalisation of ties between Pyongyang and Washington.

In a keynote speech, a chief Chinese delegate Tang Jiaxuan also said the fact that relations were not normalised between North Korea and the United States, and other Western countries was not "normal."

"We hope to see relaxation of tension between the two sides of the peninsula through dialogues while welcoming improved relations and ultimate normalisation of relations between the DPRK and the U.S.," Mr. Jiazuan said.

The last frontier of the cold war, the demilitarised zone between the capitalist South and the Communist North, has seen repeated skirmishes.

It is that history — the fear the beleaguered North Koreans might lash out against South Korea and the 37,000 U.S. troops there — that prompted Washington to push hard for the talks.

The peace talks kicked off as reports from North Korea indicated the infant mortality rate had nearly doubled in the famine-stricken nation of 22 million.

U.S. and South Korean officials have suggested it was the urgent need for food aid that had brought Pyongyang to the conference table. Officially, however, the accent was on a peace treaty.

Seoul has made it clear however that its own recent economic crisis meant it would not have the resources to provide significant aid to Pyongyang.

The opening of the talks coincided with reports of the first published statistics from Pyongyang on the effects of massive food shortages, showing a mortality rate among children under five of more than one in 20.

The figures also indicated a plummeting birth rate.

"The problem is of staggering proportions and although people are not dying of starvation, they don't get enough to eat and then they are getting sick and dying," American Vice-Chairman Guy Smith said.



A Tamil woman from Jaffna in northern Sri Lanka holds up a photograph of a missing family member during a demonstration in Colombo to protest against alleged human rights violations by government troops (Reuter photo)

Sri Lanka marks human rights day with calls to end war

COLOMBO (AFP) — Human rights organisations in Sri Lanka staged a demonstration here Wednesday demanding an end to the country's Tamil separatist war and freedom for detainees held in custody without charges.

Some 15 groups held the protest outside the main railway station here to mark the International Human Rights Day with appeals for peace in Sri Lanka where more than 50,000 people have died in the ethnic conflict since 1972.

"We need to win peace. Let us build unity among Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims," the demonstrators chanted while carrying placards demanding the release of those detained by security forces.

The demonstrators were joined by minority Tamil groups which are leading a campaign to secure the release of hundreds of people who have "disappeared" after being taken into custody by troops.

Dozens of minority Tamil men and women staged a demonstration at the same venue in October demanding information about some 600 of their children and husbands who disappeared in the northern peninsula of Jaffna.

The London-based rights group, Amnesty International, reported last month that most of the 600 people who disappeared had been tortured to death.

A Tamil lawyer here said there had been nearly 680 cases of disappearances in the Jaffna Peninsula last year. Security forces captured Jaffna from the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in December 1995.

The lawyer, Maheswary Velautham, said the human rights situation in Jaffna, however, had improved this year.

"Out of the 676 cases of disappearances last year, about 500 were from the Thenamarchchi sector of Jaffna," Ms. Velautham said, adding they were able to trace and secure the release of 43 people.

"In the Vadamarchchi sector of Jaffna, the local population has good relations with the military and there are no cases of disappearances there," she added.

A United Nations human rights official who visited Jaffna in September said he had received complaints of some 350 to 600 missing people in the region.

Senegalese lawyer Bacre Waly Ndiaye — the U.N. special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions — said the complaints related to disappearances, harassment of women and extrajudicial killings.

"It is a very difficult situation," Mr. Ndiaye said. "Some missing persons were found. But many people could not be traced. I do not see a way out."

Amnesty said there was a clear pattern of "disappearances" in reprisal for attacks carried out by the LTTE.

Serbs walk out of Bosnia conference in Kosovo protest

BONN (AFP) — The Yugoslav and Bosnian Serb delegates to a Bosnian peace conference here walked out Wednesday to protest a call for human rights in the Albanian-majority Kosovo region of Serbia, conference officials said.

Dragomir Vucicevic, political director of the Yugoslav foreign ministry, walked out over discussions of a clause in the final text of the conference that called for minority rights to be respected in Kosovo, where ethnic Albanians have clashed with Serb rule.

Bosnian Serbs Momcilo Krajisnik and Biljana Plavsic also walked out to show solidarity with their fellow Serbs, although Ms. Plavsic may have been trying to get her two colleagues to return, conference officials said. Rump Yugoslavia is made up of Serbia and Montenegro.

German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel said Tuesday about Kosovo that there should be "a special status for the region and a guarantee that human and minority rights will be respected. A political solution is long overdue. The violence must stop."

Mr. Vucicevic immediately responded for Yugoslavia by denouncing what he called "unacceptable interference in our internal affairs."

But Mr. Kinkel's comments were followed by similar statements for human rights in Kosovo by British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook and U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott.

Said Mr. Talbott: "A settlement in Kosovo must ensure the political and human rights of the Albanian community within current international borders."

Russia, a traditional ally of the Serbs, was also in support of mentioning Kosovo in the final text, conference sources said.

French and German foreign ministers Hubert Vedrine and Klaus Kinkel had called earlier this month for Kosovo to have a special status and for talks between Belgrade and Albanians in the southern province, where Albanians are a majority of 90 per cent.

Kosovo was an autonomous region of Serbia until its then hard-line leader Slobodan Milosevic voided its status in 1989, and seeks independence. Earlier this month, several armed clashes between Albanians and Serb police left three dead, including one policeman, and six wounded.

Belgrade condemns Albanian separatist activists as terrorists. Western countries fear that Kosovo is another Balkan flashpoint that risks exploding into war, as did Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Stop persecuting released political prisoners — Chinese dissident

BEIJING (AFP) — Veteran Chinese dissident Qin Yongmin Wednesday called on the authorities to scrap a decree that puts released political prisoners under tight police surveillance.

Mr. Qin urged the National People's Congress — China's parliament — and government officials to "reconsider the decree and listen to some of the complaints," in a letter faxed to AFP. The public security decree, which applies to people deprived of their political rights as part of a criminal penalty, restricts the ability to travel freely, find work and change residences.

Under the measure, released political prisoners are required to register with the police twice a month and make a report of their thinking and ideas to public security officials four times a year.

"This regulation violates the United Nations treaty on economic and cultural rights which President Jiang Zemin has signed," Mr. Qin said in the letter.

The measure also prohibits released dissidents from giving any press interviews, publishing any material outside of the country, participating in public demonstrations, holding public office or accepting managerial positions.

Mr. Qin cited police harassment of dissident Ma Lianggang — who he claims has been denied work since his release on bail in 1993 — as an example of the system's abuses.

"We request authorities to restore Ma's working rights and rights of subsistence," he said, calling on local and foreign charities to send the dissident economic aid.

Mr. Ma was put on three years' probation in central Anhui province in December 1996 on charges of disseminating counter-revolutionary propaganda, and police have repeatedly denied approval when he has tried to obtain a job.

He was convicted together with activists Shen Liangqing, who was sentenced to 17 months in prison, and Huang Xiuming, who received a one-year jail term.

The convictions related to charges first brought in 1992 after the trio co-authored and distributed articles comparing the collapse of the Soviet Union with the situation in China.

The three men served 17 months in jail during 1992 and 1993 while their case was under investigation.

China's dissident community has been emboldened by the government's decision to grant the father of China's democracy movement, Wei Jingsheng, medical parole. Mr. Wei went to the United States for treatment on Nov. 16 immediately upon his release.

Mr. Qin, 44, spent eight years in jail in the 1980s for "counter-revolution" and spent another two years in jail for co-authoring a document called a "Peace Charter" in 1993 with other dissidents.

He had also called on Jiang to sign the U.N. Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the sister treaty to the Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights — signed when the Chinese leader visited the United States in late October.

Leading Shanghai activist Bao Ge, who was released in June after serving a three-year sentence in a labour camp, was driven to a U.S. exile last month. He complained he was unable to make a living and nearly everyone connected to him has suffered police harassment.

Another activist, Chen Wei, was rearrested last month after he broke the strict travel restriction by leaving the southwestern Sichuan province for Beijing. He left the province to escape police harassment which prevented him from finding work since his release in May.

In November the group Human Rights in China slammed China's policy of putting released dissidents under unreasonable restrictions, demanding the government give just-released dissidents "a chance to work and live a normal life."

Indian party urges Gandhi widow to join politics

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India's oldest party, the Congress, Wednesday stepped up its pressure on Sonia Gandhi, widow of the slain former premier, by formally asking her to lead its upcoming election campaign.

"If she joins the campaign, it would have a tremendous impact," party spokesman Vithal Gadgil said, a day after a large number of Congress leaders and supporters called on Sonia Gandhi on her 51st birthday.

The party hopes the emotional appeal of the Gandhi name could help shore up flagging support.

Mr. Gadgil said the Congress had in the past urged the reclusive Italian-born widow to come out of her shell and plunge into active politics, but to no avail.

"A formal request has been made to her by (Congress President Sitaram) Kesri," Mr. Gadgil said. "It is up to her to decide. We will have to see how she responds to our request," he said.

"Common people have an emotional attachment to the (Gandhi-Nehru) family. Her participation will make a big difference to the Congress.

"In case she does not join us, we will have to struggle very hard (in new elections scheduled early next year)," Mr. Gadgil said.

Tuesday, Mr. Kesri and other leaders of the 112-year-old Congress, which ousted Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral's coalition last month, greeted the Gandhi widow on her birthday at her heavily-guarded residence here.

Some Congress supporters distributed sweets to onlookers and motorists on the streets.

The Congress has been led by the Gandhi-Nehru family for more than four decades since the country's independence in 1947. Many Congress sympathisers believe Sonia has the charisma to win much-needed votes.

The 50-year old mother of two has refused repeated Congress appeals to lead the party in the past. Sonia has been under pressure to change her stand since the fall of the Gujral government on Nov. 28.

Some politicians blame her for the crisis. They claim she quietly egged on the Congress to topple Mr. Gujral's minority government, after he refused to dump a coalition partner linked to Sri Lankan Tamil rebels blamed for killing her husband and former Premier Rajiv Gandhi in 1991.

Sonia Gandhi is regularly courted by top Congress leaders and visited by foreign dignitaries. But she has not said whether she will join active party politics. Many feel she will not.

For years, she has concentrated on managing the massive sums donated by the government and businesses to the charitable Rajiv Gandhi Foundation.

She rarely addresses public meetings and avoids media interviews.

Ved Prakash, another party official, pointed out that Sonia Gandhi had not responded to Congress appeals so far.

"The general feeling in the party is she should take over (the party leadership), and if that is not possible at least campaign in the elections.

"Congress people feel this will help in keeping the party united and also electrify members' morale," he said.

"I am sure, in some form or other, she will help us in the elections," he added.

The once-powerful Congress has been facing a steady decline in recent years. It was voted out of power in elections last year, after a five-year reign.

Burger King enters Australian fast food market

SYDNEY (AFP) — British-owned Burger King is to spend 50 million Australian dollars ($34 million) here in the next 12 months, opening 40 new restaurants in what it called the "battle of the burgers Down Under."

Burger King, a subsidiary of Grand Metropolitan Plc, has operated in Australia since 1971, trading under the brand name Hungry Jack's because it did not hold naming rights here.

The company has now decided on a change of strategy, and will trade under the Burger King name in the future.

"Research shows that our name has an 80 per cent brand awareness amongst Australians and we are confident that the use of the Burger King brand name is our strongest weapon in our battle with McDonald's," Burger King Asia Pacific President David Chapman said in a statement.

"Burger King has steadily picked up market share against McDonald's in the U.S. and we plan to do the same here in Australia."

Until now, the company has been operating only three of its restaurants under the Burger King trademark in Australia — in Hobart, Melbourne and Cairns.

"Some Hungry Jack's franchises are understandably apprehensive about losing a 26-year-old brand name and so it is up to us to prove the strength of the Burger King name by getting the runs on the board," Mr. Chapman said.

Australian police raid 'Bandidos' bike gang

SYDNEY (R) — Australian police Wednesday arrested 12 members of the notorious "Bandidos" motorcycle gang and seized Australian dollars 1.0 million ($660,000) worth of drugs in a series of dawn raids across the country.

Operation "Barkly", which saw raids on 15 properties including Bandidos clubhouses, was the result of a year-long police investigation.

Large quantities of heroin, LSD, amphetamines and cannabis were found along with firearms such as pen pistols, shotguns, an AK47 machine gun and explosives.

"The Bandidos' national organisation structure was dealt a severe body blow by today's raids," National Crime Authority chief inspector Laurie Ratz told reporters.

"The Bandidos gang is a national and international criminal organisation with a structure which supports criminal activities, and today's raids made a huge dent," Mr. Ratz said.

Bandidos members were arrested without a shot being fired and gang members gave themselves up without a struggle, police said.

"We went to great lengths to ensure they knew it wasn't a raid by a rival motorcycle gang," said Acting Commander Ian Thomas, of the Victoria Police Organised Crime Squad.

Australian police have compared the Bandidos with sophisticated criminal networks such as the Japanese Yakuza, Chinese Triads, Colombian cocaine syndicates and Italian mafia families.

In May 1995, a national police investigation coordinated by the National Crime Authority was launched into the bandidos and other motorcycle gangs.

By July 1997, 175 people had been arrested on 456 charges, including gun and drug trading, and more than a$3.3 million in proceeds of crime had been seized.

The Bandidos' most bloody and infamous outing was on Fathers Day, Sep. 2, 1984.

In a car park in the western Sydney suburb of Milperra the Bandidos and the rival Comancheros gang staged a shoot-out that left six gang members and a 15-year-old schoolgirl dead.

The Bandidos began life in Houston, Texas in 1966 and branched out into Australia in 1983, focusing on amphetamine production, according to various police reports.



This video image taken from WTN television shows Russian security officials as they take into custody in Moscow a man (right) identified as the lone hijacker of a jetliner carrying 142 people

All hostages safe after Russian plane hijack

MOSCOW (R) — Russian security forces seized a lone man who hijacked an airliner with about 140 people aboard Wednesday and all the hostages were released safely, airport and security officials said.

"Everyone is safe and sound," Gennady Zaitsev, the head of Russia's Federal Aviation Service, told reporters at Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport where the plane landed.

The hijacker seized the Ilyushin-62 airliner earlier Wednesday after it took off from the far eastern city of Magadan en route to Moscow with about 140 passengers and crew on board, including up to eight children.

Air traffic control officials told Reuters the hijacker had demanded $10 million and clearance to fly to Switzerland.

Officials released conflicting details of how the hijack finished and it was not immediately clear whether all the hostages were freed simultaneously.

An airport spokeswoman said initially that the hijacker had surrendered but later reports made clear he had been seized by commandos.

Mr. Zaitsev said the elite Alpha commando force had detained the hijacker when he emerged from the aircraft to negotiate with officials.

He said he had been "wired up" but it was not immediately clear whether he had been carrying any real explosives. Russian news agencies quoted security officials as saying he had been carrying fake explosives.

Interfax news agency said the hijacker was a 60-year-old man but the report could not immediately be confirmed.

Russian media had earlier said there could be between one and seven hijackers.

The airliner landed at about 11.30 a.m. (0830 GMT) at Sheremetyevo where Russian security forces set up an emergency headquarters.

Police evacuated the immediate area and sealed off the domestic terminal of Sheremetyevo-1, which shares a runway with the Sheremetyevo-2 international terminal.

Officials said the airport had not been closed altogether.

President Boris Yeltsin discussed possible countermeasures with Interior Minister Anatoly Kulikov and Nikolai Kovalyov, head of the federal security service, ITAR-TASS news agency said.

It quoted Mr. Yeltsin's spokesman, Sergei Yastrzhembsky, as saying the president was "naturally worried about the fate of those on board" and was "closely monitoring the situation."

Magadan air traffic controllers said by telephone the airliner had left the city for Moscow earlier Wednesday with 143 people on board, seven of them children.

Air traffic controllers in Moscow later put the number at 142 passengers and crew, and said eight were children.

Air traffic controllers in Norilsk in northern Siberia said the captain of the airliner had informed them of the hijack by radio and said the plane was seized before it flew over the remote city.

Philippine leader moves to marshall support behind choice for successor

MANILA (AFP) — President Fidel Ramos moved Wednesday to marshall support behind his choice for a successor after a chilly public reception for the candidacy and allegations he betrayed another candidate.

Mr. Ramos Monday announced he had chosen House of Representatives Speaker Jose de Venecia to be the ruling party's standard-bearer in the May 1998 elections, despite the veteran lawmaker's poor poll ratings and image as a traditional political wheeler and dealer.

Supporters of Mr. Ramos's close friend from their military days, former Defence Secretary Renato de Villa, urged him to pursue his presidential bid without the president's support.

"We're feeling aggrieved and betrayed," said former Interior Secretary Rafael Alunan, a de Villa supporter who also played a key role in Mr. Ramos's 1992 presidential campaign.

"Here was one opportunity to push reforms but the president chose personal interest ahead of national interest," he added.

Mr. Ramos, in his weekly news conference Wednesday, acknowledged the "grumblings" from the de Villa camp but asked: "How many people can I endorse?"

He noted that Mr. de Villa had said he would abide by the president's decision for the sake of party unity.

Mr. de Venecia had been the overwhelming choice of delegates to a national party convention last month, Mr. Ramos added.

"We need Secretary de Villa. We need his group within the umbrella and the unifying embrace of the Lakas (ruling party) because after all our objective here is the victory of the ticket," said Mr. Ramos, who is barred by the constitution from seeking reelection.

A Lakas victory was necessary to "continue the reforms and maintain our very positive economic track now and fulfil our social reform obligations to the people," he said.

"If Secretary de Villa did not get my endorsement, he still has my admiration, my affection and my confidence," he said of the man who has followed his career path as national police commander, armed forces chief and defence secretary.

Presidential endorsement is crucial in a nationwide election because it throws the entire government machinery behind a candidate.

Mr. de Venecia supporters said this could offset their candidate's low ratings of three to four percent in previous polls.

The leading opposition candidate is Vice President Joseph Estrada, a former movie actor, who has been polling up to 25 per cent.

Mr. Ramos's choice of Mr. de Venecia has been met with a generally cool reception by the public. Opposition leaders gloated, claming Mr. de Venecia was a weak candidate.

"The business community normally doesn't like traditional politicians. And speaker de Venecia would have to reach out to the business community to say that perception is not the reality," said industrialist Jose Concepcion.

A corporate executive told AFP that Mr. de Venecia was "too much of a politician who wants to please everybody. How can he make tough decisions during his presidency?"

Cardinal Jaime Sin, the influential archbishop of Manila, noted the low opinion poll ratings given to Mr. de Venecia.

"He is always coming to the house (to seek Sin's support), but I do not know if he is going to win," Mr. Sin told reporters Wednesday.

In his first public comment since Mr. Ramos bypassed him, Mr. de Villa said in a television interview Wednesday he would "continue to assess the situation and determine exactly what else I can do."

"Don't count him out yet," said Mr. de Villa's campaign manager, telecommunications executive Jose de Jesus.

Landmark climate deal appears just hours away

KYOTO, Japan (R) — An historic deal to cut global greenhouse gas emissions Wednesday was only hours away after Europe and the United States narrowed differences about the size of reductions but kept haggling until the last minute about how to implement them.

U.S. and European Union negotiators signalled a deal would be done on the last day of a United Nations conference on the issue which has endured 10 days of talks to get this far.

"I think we can make it today," EU Environment Commissioner Rite Bjerregaard told reporters.

A senior U.S. official indicated an agreement was imminent.

"The train is there and it's basically ready to ride," he said.

A senior conference source laid out a scenario in which a deal would be adopted by the meeting at about midnight (1500 GMT).

Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto had called President Bill Clinton and the leaders of Britain, Italy and Germany in the early hours of the morning to ask their help in pushing negotiators for the final effort.

The United States, the world's largest polluter, which had wanted to stabilise emissions at 1990 levels in the next 15 years, and the EU, which had the most ambitious plans for cuts of 15 per cent, gave ground in the last hours.

Authoritative sources said the figures had narrowed to eight per cent for the European Union, seven per cent for the United States and six per cent for Japan.

With the numbers game all but settled, the sources said the last main sticking point was "emissions trading", big business' biggest hope and environmentalists' biggest fear.

Under emissions trading, a country would be able to sell any unused portion of its allowable emissions for cash or technology transfers. The buyer could use the seller's unused portion to meet its own emissions targets.

Critics complain the plan would allow big polluters to buy their way out of cutting emissions in their own country.

The sources said the European Union wants a clearly defined cap to the amount of emissions reductions developed countries can achieve through such trading.

The Europeans call the U.S. desire for a 50 per cent figure too much, saying that no more than 33 per cent of reductions should be accomplished through trading.

EU politicians will have to explain to their people that the have agreed to something requiring that they are going to reduce emissions — which implies that they are going to undertake the burden of domestic cuts — while the U.S. does nothing at home, a EU official said.

A political fight also was shaping up in the United States.

A group of U.S. senators and congressmen in Kyoto to observe the meeting predicted a major battle to muster senatorial support for an accord.

"This is a fight that I am willing to fight in the U.S. Senate," said Democratic Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts, a supporter of the deal.

Joseph Lieberman, a Democratic senator from Connecticut, echoed this view.

Supporters rally behind U.S. civil rights nominee

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Members of Congress, civil rights advocates and Asian-American groups rallied Tuesday in support of President Bill Clinton's troubled nomination of Bill Lann Lee as top U.S. civil rights enforcer.

The show of support for Mr. Lee, named to head the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, came amid indications the White House may skirt Senate approval by making the appointment during Congress' recess.

"Release Bill Lee as a hostage and take the vote to the floor of the U.S. Senate," said representative Bob Matsui, one of six Democratic lawmakers to call for Senate action on Mr. Lee's nomination.

"I want to express my outrage at something I have not seen since civil rights became a real issue," said Eleanor Holmes Norton, the non-voting delegate from the District of Columbia in the House of Representatives.

Senate Republican leaders have stalled the nomination, objecting to his support for "affirmative action" programmes that use racial preference to correct past discrimination.

Ms. Norton called affirmative action a false issue, saying the matter will eventually be decided by the courts.

But Mr. Lee nomination has also been watched closely because he would be the highest-ranking Asian-American in the federal administration.

"There's no question the Asian-American community feels outraged by this," said Matsui, a Japanese-American from California who was interned as an infant during World War II.

"I don't think (senators) understood the power of this community and the support this community has given and will continue to give to Bill Lann Lee," he said. "The Asian-American community will remember this."

The lawmakers were joined by the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, a coalition of civil rights organisations. Another civil rights coalition, People for the American Way, held events in support of Mr. Lee in other U.S. cities.

Separately, more than 50 Asian-American organisations signed a statement urging the Senate to confirm Mr. Lee.

"His nomination ... is extremely important to the Asian Pacific American community and to all who believe in civil rights," the statement said.

Several reports have indicated Mr. Clinton was leaning towards a "recess appointment" that would not require Senate action.

Mr. Clinton said in an interview published Friday he was "really disappointed" with last month's refusal by the Republican-led Senate Judiciary Committee to send Mr. Lee's nomination to the full Senate.

Congressional supporters said they would back a recess appointment by Mr. Clinton but that they would still press for a Senate vote on the nomination.

Sources in Congress said they expected Mr. Clinton to wait a week or so for any signal from Republican leaders about the nomination before making the unusual appointment. Congress is in recess until late January.

Mr. Lee, who met on Capitol Hill with members of the Senate and House, declined to answer questions about his prospects.

"I'm deeply appreciative of all the support Americans have given me," he said during a photo opportunity with congressional supporters. "I look forward to being on the job as the president has said.

In a statement issued to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the creation of the Civil Rights Division, Mr. Clinton made no reference to a special appointment but said Mr. Lee "has lived the American dream and ... deserves to be America's next assistant attorney general for civil rights."

Mr. Lee, a Chinese-American lawyer who has spoken publicly and poignantly about the discrimination his father faced as a new immigrant, has met stiff and consistent opposition from Republicans over affirmative action.

White House officials and others have suggested his ethnic background may be a factor in the Senate committee's refusal to act on the nomination.

Branson gets balloon back

MARRAKECH, Morocco (AFP) — British billionaire Richard Branson recovered his balloon Wednesday morning on Moroccan territory, close to the border with Algeria, his spokesman said.

The hot air and helium balloon broke its moorings Tuesday in a freak gust of wind, as final preparations were under way for Mr. Branson's second bid to become the first man to circumnavigate the world nonstop in a hot-air balloon.

It drifted across Algeria at sunset Tuesday at an altitude of around 1,500 metres but was blown back over the border early Wednesday into a desert zone southeast of the Moroccan town of Ouarzazate.

Mr. Branson was at the scene trying to assess whether the canopy was still in a fit state to be used for the attempt, the spokesman said.

Tuesday evening Mr. Branson told a press conference that he did not intend to give up his bid to fly around the world. If the canopy was recovered in one piece, he said he would make an attempt at the end of the week or the beginning of next week. Otherwise he would reschedule the launch for Jan. 14.

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To betray a friend

IRAQ'S EXECUTION of four Jordanian students accused of smuggling is an act of aggression that Baghdad committed against a country and people who stood by its side when all the world stood against it. It only reinforces the notion that the regime in Baghdad has no respect for human life. Even the most brutal of regimes do not execute students for smuggling auto spare parts.

The incident is not only atrocious but ill-timed. At a moment when Jordanians use all the means and venues available to them to defend the cause of Iraq and its people in every arena and at every level, it will be extremely difficult for them to understand Baghdad's motives behind killing the four students. What is more alarming, however, is the revelation that Iraq holds hundreds of Jordanian prisoners, many of whom are under the threat of death and held in appalling conditions.

That Jordan reacted by demanding that Iraq reduce its diplomats in Amman by seven is testimony to the Kingdom's level of tolerance and its keenness on keeping brotherly relations with all Arab and Muslim countries no matter how ill-disposed their regimes are.

Baghdad must recall that when in the late 1970s it executed a Jordanian student on spying charges, Jordan severed all diplomatic ties and closed its borders with Iraq. This time around, Jordan does not want to add to the misery of the Iraqi people by closing the borders that they use to import their essentials and to travel to and from Iraq.

Only last month, in Amman, the Iraqi deputy prime minister, Tareq Aziz, was lecturing newspaper editors and writers on his country's version of human rights. If this is an example, then we can only pity the Iraqi people for what befell them. While the families of the four students dress their wounds and other Jordanians at large thank their fortunes for the level of human rights that they enjoy, they will still sympathise with the Iraqi people who suffer oppression from within and without and of whom many go to the gallows for the simplest of offences.

The world will remember that a few years back the Iraqi regime imposed barbaric methods of punishment on its people, severing limbs and cutting ears. But most important the Iraqis will not forget. At the end the people will triumph.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Hosni Ayesh challenged the Muslim leaders meeting in Tehran to demand the lifting of sanctions on Iraq in a show of solidarity with the Iraqi people. Iraq is a member of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) which organised the Islamic summit, and its people are predominantly Muslims, but the Muslim leaders are not likely to reflect their peoples' true feelings towards the starving nation, he said. For its part, Iran which is hosting the conference and which refuses to return Iraqi aircraft and continues to occupy Arab islands, is naturally happy over the continued sanctions on Iraq and the destruction of this neighbour's weapons as long as the Arab countries neighbouring Iraq are determined to maintain the embargo on Baghdad and actually finance it, the writer charged. He said the Islamic leaders in Tehran seem to be unaware of the fact that the unjust embargo on Iraq has killed more than a million people mostly women and children. He said the Muslim leaders do not realise that the atomic bombs dropped by the U.S. on Japan in the World War II killed only 400,000 and that the U.S. crime against Iraq is continuing to murder many more times that number.

Al Ra'i's Fahed Fanek said U.S.-Arab relations are at their lowest level ever largely due to Washington's unlimited support for Israel's continued aggression on the Arab World. The writer said the deteriorating ties were demonstrated Arab countries' overwhelming rejection of Washington's aggressive policy towards Iraq and their boycott of the Doha economic meeting. However, the U.S. seems to be indifferent as long as its own economic interests are protected, Dr. Fanek added. He said the U.S. has more economic interests in Saudi Arabia than in Israel, but Washington seems to be taking Saudi Arabia for granted and continues to support the Jewish state. The U.S. administration's failures in foreign policy, particularly towards the Middle East, has left a vacuum that is being filled by the U.S. Congress which is practically handling America's foreign policy at present, according to the writer. It is regrettable, Dr. Fanek said, to see the Europeans failing to move forward and fill the vacuum, but it seems also that the Europeans too are assured that their own interests in the Arab World are also secure, so why bother. He said that while half of Israel's parliamentarians oppose Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu's policies, one can not find a single member of the U.S. Congress not supporting the Israeli prime minister's practices.

View from Academia

By Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

Exercising freedom of expression takes competence

OVER THE past decade (especially), much has been said about freedom of expression, mainly in connection with the press. Recently, the matter is being raised in relation to the new press and publications law, which some see as somewhat curtailing freedoms, particularly those of the weekly tabloids and what gets said in them.

Two obvious facts have to be stated at the outset. The first is that there has been (particulary since 1989) a great margin of freedom of expression in the Kingdom, greater than in most neighbouring and developing countries. There is hardly any serious political, economic or social matter of public concern which one cannot tackle. Read what is said not only in the existing tabloids but also what some writers in the mainstream press say. And in our formal and informal gatherings we hardly fear to raise any question

The second fact is that there is nowhere in the world (including the most developed, advanced, and free countries) absolute freedom of expression. Societies the world over have their own red lines and taboos (military, economic, social, political, etc.)

In our part of the world, most of those who complain of a lack of freedom of expression appear to be of two types. The first comprises those who hold extreme views on matters, views bordering on the nihilistic, the anarchic, the subversive and — paradoxically and ironically — the repressive. Most of these people belong to political parties which are either of an "underground" mentality (still) or of a hard-line nature. Such people are dictatorial, oppressive and tyrannical deep-down, and they hold reactionary views on matters of politics, economics, religion, and social relations.

The second comprises those who, simply, do not have the skill or ability to express. In my opinion, expression is a skill. When we talk about freedom of expression, we have to emphasise freedom (clearly), but we also have to emphasise the manner and style through which one expresses one's self.

Having been a close observer of our educational institutions (from the kindergarten to the Ph.D. level), I would say that most of our students (including those who specialise in Mass Communication and Media) graduate without the skill to communicate or express themselves effectively. There ought to be, I believe, a difference (a fundamental one) between the way my illiterate grandmother expresses herself and the way our graduating students, intellectuals, and professional writers express themselves. Most of our graduating students lack the necessary skill of expression (oral or written), but so do many of our "professional" writers (including not only columnists, editorialists, and feature-story writers but also poets and novelists). This is a sad educational and cultural fact.

Two elements many of our individuals (aspiring or even practising writers) are not good at. The first is reliance on facts. Most of those who complain against freedom of expression want to express or write without first checking their facts. Most write or express (or want to write and express) on the basis of impressions and feelings, the way poets write. Indeed, one of the sad facts about our world of education today is that we do not seem to distinguish much between creative writing (poetry, fiction, etc.) and analytical essays (on political, social, economic matters).

The second element has to do with style. The style in which one expresses one's self is as important (if not more important than) the content. When people come to write whole essays about only the negative or only the positive, this is unacceptable. Nothing is totally positive or totally negative. There are many problems in Jordan, and many obstacles which stand in the way of progress; but there have been many important achievements, breakthroughs, and developments. When one writes, one is expected to write intelligently and fairly. Otherwise, what one writes is bad writing.

In our debate about freedom of expression, we have to take the style, ability, and qualification to express, write or communicate seriously. Freedom of expression is important, but competence in expression is equally important.

A 'dangerous woman' is still on the loose in South Africa

By Gwynne Dyer

SOMETIMES, A priest is precisely the wrong person for the job. Last week in Johannesburg was one of those times.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu's job was to run the inquiry of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) into the activities of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, ex-wife of South Africa's President Nelson Mandela, described by some witnesses as a demagogue and murderer. He did it badly, and as a result Madikizela-Mandela is still on the loose.

Desmond Tutu is a brave man who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 for his role in the anti-apartheid struggle, but nobody ever called him tough. He had no way of dealing with Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, who simply denied all her alleged crimes, regardless of the evidence.

This is unfortunate, because Madikizela-Mandela's ambition is to become deputy leader of the ANC in succession to Thabo Mbeki, who takes over from Nelson Mandela as ANC president this month. Then when Mbeki replaces Mandela as president of South Africa in the 1999 election, Winnie would be deputy president, just one heartbeat away from control of Africa's only industrialised country.

That would be a calamity, for Winnie Madikizela-Mandela in power would be like Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, Milton Obote in Uganda, even Mobutu Sese Seko in former Zaire. Like those first-generation African leaders, she has charisma, but no self-control. Like them, she would end up creating a nightmare of corruption and violence. Like them, she would ruin her country.

The men and women who dominate the ANC's present leadership are more like what the rest of Africa calls 'second-generation' leaders (even though they are the first generation of non-whites to govern South Africa). They have had time to think about what went wrong elsewhere in Africa, and they work hard to preserve democracy and the rule of law in South Africa.

It's an uphill struggle, because many poor South Africans want radical action to change their lives, and they prefer to listen to the simple solutions peddled by populists like Winnie. South Africa's economy grew more slowly this year than its birth rate, and unemployment is 30 per cent. What have the poor got to lose?

Everything. Slow growth while the long-sheltered South African economy adjusts to globalisation is hard to bear. The new class of privileged blacks alongside the privileged whites is very hard to bear if you live in a squatter camp. But it can get much worse than that, as many people elsewhere in Africa can tell you.

Three years after the end of white minority rule, South Africa is still a state of laws. Crime is rampant, but the government does not sponsor it; it tries to control it. Poverty is endemic, but the government has coherent strategies for fighting it. The economy is stagnant, but nobody is looting it, and it could yet be the engine of an African economic renaissance.

This is what the ANC government seeks to preserve, and what Winnie Mandela's rage and greed would destroy. That is why the TRC hearings on her reign of terror in Soweto in 1987-89 were so important: if they had made her character clear to the nation, her potential for future trouble would have been greatly reduced.

The two weeks of testimony produced a huge amount of evidence to show that Winnie was personally involved in the six known murders and dozens of other assaults and 'disappearances' that are attributed to her gang of thugs and enforcers, the 'Mandela United Football Club.' And the whole country was watching.

Winnie never confessed, never apologised, never explained — and she walked out of the TRC all but vindicated in the eyes of those who want to believe she is still the 'Mother of the Nation'.

But the TRC's case was undermined by the evasiveness of some senior ANC witnesses. It was weakened by the self-interest of some of her former accomplices, now seeking amnesty for their crimes, and by the non-appearance of other witnesses who were openly intimidated by Winnie's entourage.

It was mocked by Winnie herself, who denied even the very existence of the 'Mandela United' gang in 1988-89. "If we believe your evidence, everybody else is lying," said TRC member Yasmin Snooka. "Yes," smiled Winnie Mandela. "It's true."

Above all, it was undermined by Archbishop Tutu, who was so eager for a happy ending that he pleaded with her: "You are an icon, a stalwart of the liberation struggle. You have no idea how your greatness will be enhanced if you said 'Sorry, things went horribly wrong.' Please," he sobbed. "I beg you, I beg you." Winnie condescended to reply: "It's true that things went horribly wrong... when we were away." And that was all.

Two convicted murderers had testified that she paid them to kill an uncooperative doctor. Three mothers had claimed that she had kidnapped or killed their children. Five eye-witnesses said they saw her lead the assault on 14-year-old Stompie Moeketsie Seipei in January, 1989. They were all lying, said Winnie.

At the end, when Winnie Madikizela-Mandela's story about being elsewhere during Stompie's murder was breaking down under cross-examination, Desmond Tutu cut the questioning short and invited everyone to the front of the court for a 'reconciliation.' Stompie's mother, betrayed by her own religious reflexes, was even suckered into embracing the woman who TRC witnesses said murdered her son.

Winnie never confessed, never apologised, never explained — and she walked out of the TRC all but vindicated in the eyes of those who want to believe she is still the 'Mother of the Nation.'

The ANC Women's League has decided after great internal battles not to nominate her for deputy president at the party's triennial congress at Mafikeng on Dec.18, but she may well be nominated from the floor. In any case she is still a serious candidate for the vice-presidency of South Africa in the 1999 election — or even the presidency if she breaks with the ANC.

Winnie Madikizela-Mandela may never be the president of South Africa, but at the least she will continue to hover over the political scene, frightening investment away, undermining law and order, and making democracy harder to preserve. An opportunity to discredit her has been missed, and South Africa will be paying the price for years.

Lessons from Doha

By Khalil E. Jahshan

MUCH HAS been written about the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) economic conference held in Doha, Qatar, last month. Most objective analysts and observers concluded that the Doha conference failed in achieving its declared goals. The conferees left Qatar on Nov. 18 without even agreeing on whether or where the next conference would be held.

Although the conference is well behind us, several important questions deserve further attention. First and foremost, who failed in Doha? Was it Qatar's failure or someone else's? Second, whose fault was it? Are the Arabs to blame for "boycotting" the conference or were they justified in doing so? And most importantly, what are the lessons to be learned from this experience?

First, in the aftermath of the conference, MENA was portrayed by many as Doha's failure. Indeed, the conference did fail to produce credible answers for pressing regional economic problems. The failure, however, was not Qatar's, which managed, under great pressure, to achieve its immediate national goals and to emerge relatively intact from this controversial event, particularly after the recent Saudi-brokered reconciliation with Egypt. That much could not be said for the United States, the power behind the conference and which pushed relentlessly for its convening without doing its homework in creating the objective conditions necessary for its success.

Frankly speaking, the Clinton administration emerged as the main loser from Doha with U.S. credibility and policy in the region significantly damaged. The impact of this damage came back to haunt the administration in its subsequent futile attempts to mobilise Arab allies in the ongoing confrontation with Iraq.

Second, who was responsible for America's failure in Doha? As expected, some tried to pin the blame on the Arab side for boycotting the conference and for politicising its proceedings. "Doomed from the start by an Arab boycott," read a Reuters wire story. The U.S.-backed event was certainly doomed from the start, but not by the boycott of most Arab countries or by any shortcomings on the part of its Arab host. It was predictably destined to fail due to the collapse of the Middle East peace process brought about by Israel's intransigence and unwillingness to comply with its own commitments and agreements with its Arab neighbours and by the failure of the Clinton administration to actively and effectively defend the integrity of the process.

The Doha meeting was the fourth MENA conference since 1994 to take place in the context of the multilateral component of the Middle East peace process. The purpose of these gatherings was to bring together interested parties within and outside the region to focus on common economic concerns and identify joint investment and development strategies to tackle these problems and bring about a new Middle East with more adequate levels of security and stability for all its countries. From the Arab perspective, these activities were contingent upon tangible progress in the bilateral tracks of the process. Unfortunately, with the collapse of the negotiations, MENA lost its raison d'être and became a veiled attempt by the United States to force the Arab World to prematurely and unjustifiably normalise relations with Israel.

Finally, the lessons to be learned from the failure of U.S. policy in Doha are many. We will arbitrarily focus on two such lessons of great importance to U.S.-Arab relations.

First, Doha was a major turning point in U.S.-Arab relations in the sense that the Arab reaction to the conference restored the linkage between American policy in the Gulf and U.S. policy vis-a-vis the Arab-Israeli conflict. The U.S. government can no longer afford to maintain this artificial separation between the two components of its own policy in the region. The Clinton administration's blind support for Israel and its unwillingness to forcefully challenge Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu's unilateral dismantling of the Middle East peace process have eroded U.S. credibility in the region, alienated our Arab allies, and visibly damaged American interests in this vital region.

Second, the Doha experience proved unequivocally that Arab allies can say "no" to Uncle Sam and live to tell about it. Resisting massive U.S. pressure to attend the conference shattered the long-held myth that Arab allies, particularly in the Gulf, are so dependent on American support that they have to surrender their own independent and sovereign decision-making process due to the absence of alternative options of their own. Doha proved that the Arabs can make tough decisions based on their own national interests without damaging their bilateral relations with the United States.

The writer is president of the National Association of Arab Americans (NAAA) in Washington, DC. He contributed this article to the Jordan Times.

LETTERS

A most unhappy tourist

To the Editor:

MY HUSBAND and I are Americans. We recently were in Jordan on a tourist visit. Our experience in Petra was overall very favourable and memorable. All the people we met in and outside the park were helpful, and most importantly, charming. However, our experience in Aqaba, where we hoped to do some diving, was incredibly and shockingly bad.

We stayed in the best hotel available and dove with the government-run diving centre. At both establishments we found facilities lacking and staff treatment of customers not just inhospitable, but insulting. To give you just a few examples, at the hotel, where we were guests, we were charged JD 3.50 for sitting in a chair in front of the dive centre. When we protested, the hotel attendant said, "Well, we give you a cushion." At the Royal Diving Centre all of the women's size 39-41 fins were stretched out of shape, and thus I could not find one to fit me properly. The manager told me, "we do not have fins to fit an intermediate size."

Right now heaps of tour groups are cancelling their dive trips to Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, due to the terrorist threat. A good number are coming instead to Aqaba. If you send just a per cent home as angry as we were, I fear your country will miss a great opportunity to build your tourism industry substantially. Tour operators will not send more people if others who visit Jordan complain of bad experiences.

This affects a lot of Jordanian people: restaurant owners, souvenir shop clerks, taxi drivers, tour guides, etc. I felt our story should be told. The people have a right to know how greedy and rich hotel owners as well as mismanaged government-run tourist operators in Jordan treat their customers and thus ruin tourism for everyone. And interestingly, back in Cyprus where we live, several people told me they had already heard from others that Jordan has become overpriced.

Barbara Durkin
Larnaca
Cyprus

Petra papyrus scrolls spark new study of St. Aaron mountain and monastery at Petra

By Rami G. Khouri
Special to the Jordan Times

WHEN THE charred and carbonised remains of more than 150 rolled-up scrolls were discovered in the collapsed remains of a Byzantine church at Petra in late 1993, scholars assumed that this single largest collection of written material from ancient Jordan would clarify many aspects of Byzantine society and economy in 6th century south Jordan. That expectation has been more than fulfilled to date, with the complete conservation and initial reading of all 152 scrolls by two teams from the University of Helsinki (Finland) and the University of Michigan, headed respectively by Dr. Jaakko Frosen and Dr. Ludwig Koenen.

The scrolls' readable texts have been dated between A.D. 528 and 582, during the reign of the Emperor Justinian and his successors (some of the undated fragments may be earlier or later). The texts are mainly legal documents involving several families who intermarried over at least two generations, and cover matters such as inheritance, legal agreements, contracts and settlement of disputes. They mention towns and places other than Petra, such as Augustopolis (modern Udhrub), Eleutheropolis, Zadakathon (Sadaqa) and others in the vicinity of Petra.

Some of the international scholars working on the scrolls have now started relating the documentary texts to the many unexamined archaeological remains in and around Petra. One of the most exciting such ventures took to the field in October this year, in the form of a two-week reconnaissance project to plan for a proper survey and mapping of Jabal Haroon (Mt. Aaron), located about a three hours' walk south-west of the ancient city-centre. Dr. Frosen said in a recent interview in Amman that the Petra papyrus scrolls mention several churches and other public buildings, notably: the Chapel of the Saint and Glorious Martyr Kyrikos in Zadakathon; the Church of the Saint and Glorious Martyr Theodoros in Augustopolis; the Church of our All-Holy Mistress the Glorious God-bearing Ever Virgin Mary in Petra; the Hostel or Hospital in Petra of the Saint and Gloriously Triumphant Martyr Kyrikos (he had died at the age of two in Palestine in the early Christian era); and the Monastery (or holy building) of our Lord the Saint High-Priest Aaron (Hagios Oikos, in Greek) outside of the city of Petra. According to prevalent tradition, Mt. Aaron is the burial place of the Prophet Aaron, Moses' brother. A mosque-shrine built over the remains of an earlier church at the summit symbolises the mountain's sacred status to the monotheistic faiths. A complex of buried buildings on a terrace just below the summit almost certainly was the monastery/church of Saint Aaron, which is mentioned in a carbonised scroll.

The long-term project aims for a full understanding of the topography, history, epigraphy, and environment of the mountain and its immediate surroundings. This year's reconnaissance surveying and mapping aimed to get acquainted with the area better, in order to devise a long-term research project and formal survey. The work in October was conducted by a team of archaeologists and graduate students from the University of Helsinki with Dr. Zbigniew T. Fiema as chief archaeologist, and cartographers from the Helsinki University of Technology, with Dr. Frosen from the Academy of Finland/University of Helsinki as overall project director. This year's fieldwork clarified some aspects of the mountaintop site, and also identified a large-scale ancient wadi and terrace irrigation system around the sides of the mountain.

In an article published last year in the Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, American scholars Glen Peterman and Robert Schick reported on the preliminary documentation of the presumed Monastery of Saint Aaron that had been done in 1990 by a team consisting of themselves, Carol Palmer and the late Kenneth Russell. The monastery ruins, remarkably enough, had never been noted by scholars and travelers earlier this century, such as T. Wiegand in 1920 and M.R. Savignac in 1936 who described the mosque-shrine on the summit but never mentioned the presumed monastery complex below it.

Substantial remains

The outlines of the structure are clearest from the air, as seen in the accompanying photograph taken by Jane Taylor in 1990 (the white mosque-shrine is visible at the left, on the summit of Jabal Haroon, while the outlines of the monastery complex are clear on the lower terrace, just right of centre of the photo).

The monastery's sand-and-rubble-covered remains on the terrace below the summit comprise an architectural complex measuring 60 x 50 metres, with walls probably still standing some two to three metres high below the tumbled stones on the surface. The complex seems to comprise rooms and several courtyards surrounding a rock-cut cistern, with a possible chapel or church built into the east wall of the complex.

Preliminary examination of the site a few years ago revealed some white tesserae from mosaic floors, a few Byzantine and later periods pottery sherds, column drums, and a roof tile with an inscribed cross. East of the complex is a large, wall-enclosed area measuring some 3,000 square metres, which Schick and Peterman suggest may be an animal pen. A water reservoir with an arched roof and another more recent structure, perhaps a house, are also identifiable nearby. This year's assessment showed that the human occupation of the terrace below the summit seemed restricted to the single complex and several associated enclosures, with no other building remains visible. Most of the pottery sherds from the surface dated from the Nabataean and Byzantine periods, possibly with a few early Islamic sherds as well.



Aerial photo of the summit of Mt. Aaron (looking south-west) shows the white mosque-shrine at left; the outlines of the presumed monastery complex and the adjacent enclosure are clear on the lower terrace, just to the right of center of the photo (Photo courtesy of Jane Taylor)

The Islamic shrine on the summit is presumed to have been built over a Byzantine church, based on the evidence of some church elements that were re-used in the shrine building. It is possible, though, that the church fragments came from the monastery below, and not from a church on the summit. The church and nearby monastery on the mountain would have formed a single complex that also related in different ways to the city of Petra nearby.

"There must have been a continuous Christian presence in Petra throughout the Byzantine and early Islamic period," Dr. Schick said in a recent interview, "because the monastery would have needed such a community to support it with food, other basic needs, donations, alms, and barter trade. It is likely that the Christian community at Petra departed from the area simultaneously with, or soon after, the Crusaders' expulsion from Transjordan in 1187-89 AD."

The monastery was a common feature of Byzantine Jordan and the Levant. The Mt. Aaron monastery is the earliest one known from the region of south Jordan, south of Wadi Hasa. Other well documented monastic complexes can be visited at Mount Nebo, and the Church and Monastery of Saint Lot in Ghor es-Safi, along the south-east coast of the Dead Sea. Based on such parallels, Dr. Schick said, several dozen monks probably lived at the Mt. Aaron complex. "The situation on Jabal Haroon, with a church, monastery and nearby facilities for pilgrims at the foot of the summit, may be analogous to the situation at Mount Sinai, with the Monastery of Saint Catherine at its foot," Schick and Peterman told the Jordan Times.

Historical evidence

Several historical literary references mention the monastery and church at Jabal Haroon. Byzantine period Arabic-language references to Mar Haroon (Saint Aaron) and Greek church records or church historians' references to the mountain and/or monastery of Aaron may refer to the Petra complex or to some other complex in the region. The Arab historian Al-Mas'udi in 955/956 AD mentions Christian Melkites possessing the holy mountain of Jabal Haroon. Crusader writers around 1100 AD refer to "the monastery of St. Aaron" which they found "at the top of the mountain" at Petra. A historical reference in 1217 mentioned two monks at the mountaintop church but did not provide any other information about the monastery or the presence of a Christian community in Petra. No other references to an indigenous Christian population are known from after that date. Other visitors or religious pilgrims in the 14th-through-19th centuries AD mention Mt. Aaron and the Islamic shrine, but not the monastery, monks, church or Christian community.

The end of the Christian presence at the mountaintop complex in the 13th Century AD was followed soon after by the construction of the Islamic shrine. It was built in 1338/39 or 1327/28, depending on one's reading of the faint inscriptions over the shrine's south door and on the interior cenotaph. The text over the door mentions a son of the Mamluke Sultan al-Nasir Mohammed ibn Qalawun. Both inscriptions, along with other inscriptions and epigraphic evidence from the Jabal Haroon region, are being published soon by Department of Antiquities Petra inspector Suleiman Farajat. The middle Islamic-era inscriptions from Mt. Aaron and some Abbasid-era inscriptions from the Madras region on the east side of Petra provide unique evidence of the status of the Petra region in the middle Islamic centuries. The findings from the excavations at Khirbet Nawafleh, the old village of Wadi Mousa, provide equally important evidence of the post-medieval continuity of the Islamic era community there, Dr. Schick said.

Some of the questions that future surveying might help resolve, Dr. Frosen said in a recent interview with the Jordan Times, include: Was the summit area only a church or also a residence for monks? Was the large building complex on the terrace below the summit a monastery or a facility for visitors, or pilgrims, or both? How many monks lived there? What was the relationship between the monastery/church complex and the nearby town at Petra?

This year's fieldwork was restricted to minor archaeological reconnaissance in view of the site's importance and its sacred nature to the three monotheistic religions. The inhabitants of the region were always friendly and cooperative, Dr. Frosen noted, and also provided valuable information about the location of some of the ancient facilities and their use by family members earlier this century.

Dr. Frosen said one of the novel aspects of the research deriving its origin from the finds from the Byzantine church in Petra is the combination of five different sources of information about ancient sites and society in the region: textual evidence from the scrolls, information from the architectural remains and extensive floor mosaics of the church, textual information from other historical sources, the results of surveying on the ground, and the recollections of past places and names as passed down locally from generation to generation. Dr. Frosen noted, for example, that the local inhabitants of Petra, when asked about names of places mentioned in the scrolls, pointed out places in the Petra region that have retained the same or very similar names over the past 1500 years. Rarely can historians draw upon so many credible, first-hand sources to confirm or refute their theories about the location and function of ancient facilities.

Irrigation system revealed

The most interesting new finding of this year's reconnaissance work was the identification of a large-scale system of irrigation using the natural runoff of winter rainwater on the hillsides and in the wadis (seasonal riverbeds). The system operated mainly to the west and south of Jabal Haroon, Dr. Fiema said in an interview here recently, and was almost certainly designed for large-scale agricultural production. The system's two principal agricultural methods were the wadi farming and terracing. In the wadi farming method, the wadi was cut by a series of stone barrages creating consecutive 'steps' along the course of the wadi. Water running down and spilling over the barriers would reach higher points on the opposite slopes. At the same time the cascading water would deposit some of the mud it carried along and thus create an area for cultivation of crops at each barrage. The other component, slope terracing, occurred on the slopes of the mountain and consisted of a series of retaining walls which supported cultivated areas. Also here, particles of muddy fertile soil floating in water were deposited on the horizontal levels. Such a method was particularly suitable for groves, orchards and vineyards. "The size, scale and numbers of terraces and wadi farming facilities are much bigger than anything else known in this region, including the irrigation works of Nessana in the Naqab (Negev)," Dr. Fiema said, "though smaller scale systems of this kind are known from other parts of Jordan, Palestine and the Levant." The system probably dates from the Nabataean period and was re-used in the Byzantine era, Dr. Fiema added. Some of the fields irrigated by the ancient system are still cultivated today, and residents of the Petra region recall their fathers repairing and using some of the ancient terrace walls, barrages, water channels, and small dams. Most of the barrages are between half a metre and two metres high. The main wadi which surrounds Jabal Haroon on the southern and western sides features more than 20 barrages built across its course. Large threshing floors near the agricultural fields were also noted during the reconnaissance. No new cisterns were spotted this year, other than those already known in the area.

The scale and complexity of the irrigation system suggests that this was a public works system, not a private venture, given the amount of manpower and organisation required to maintain it. Very few inscriptions were found, and those that were identified or were previously known are mostly short texts in Nabataean, with very little in Greek. The lack of Greek texts is surprising, scholars say, for a sacred pilgrimage area that was inhabited throughout the Byzantine period; it could be explained by the heavy erosion suffered by the mountainsides in the past millennium and a half, which would have wiped away most inscriptions.

The team will now prepare cartographic plans and computerised three-dimensional models of the mountain and its surrounding valleys, and prepare a strategy for the long-term surveying and study of the region and its monuments.

Always out of fashion

chip talk



By Jean-Claude Elias

WE HAVE almost become accustomed to the fast changes in computer technology. IC (integrated circuits or "chips") designers and manufacturers seem to enjoy the pressure they put on us, keeping us continuously on the lookout for whatever new toys they are about to release. But even those who can afford, financially speaking, to upgrade their equipment and programmes all the time can never be perfectly up-to-date.

The name of the game manufacturers are playing is to always have an announcement about a new, soon-to-be-released but not-yet-available product. Such an advertisement is called a "teaser" in the profession. Assume you are shopping for the latest CD-ROM drive. The vendor can only sell you the fastest model on the market, currently the 24X, but you know perfectly well that the 60X, for example, has been announced and is expected to hit the market in say three or four months.

You can buy now the most powerful CPU (central processing unit, the computer's main chip) one can find anywhere, namely the Pentium II 300 processor, but you will still be thinking of the "Merced" CPU Intel has announced as a successor to the Pentium. There's no way you can win — even while you are buying it your CPU will always be out-of-fashion.

Running after the latest in computer technology is like watching a successful soap opera – it doesn't seem to have an end. Every year PC resellers in Europe and the U.S. wait for the winter holiday season to give their promotion campaign an extra push. They know that people will buy upgrades, accessories and additions for their beloved PC even if they don't absolutely need them. They are just too tempting not to have. Besides, doesn't it make more sense to buy computer-related toys than completely useless gadgets?

On social occasions people (ladies included, yes!) are comparing their respective PC setups like they would compare their cars, dresses, TV sets or any other "traditional" gear. The game is particularly difficult since nobody is completely up-to-date as demonstrated above. The smart ones will not talk of the CPU or CD-ROM drive they own but rather of the one they heard of. After all, talking about technology may be the only way to be really "in".

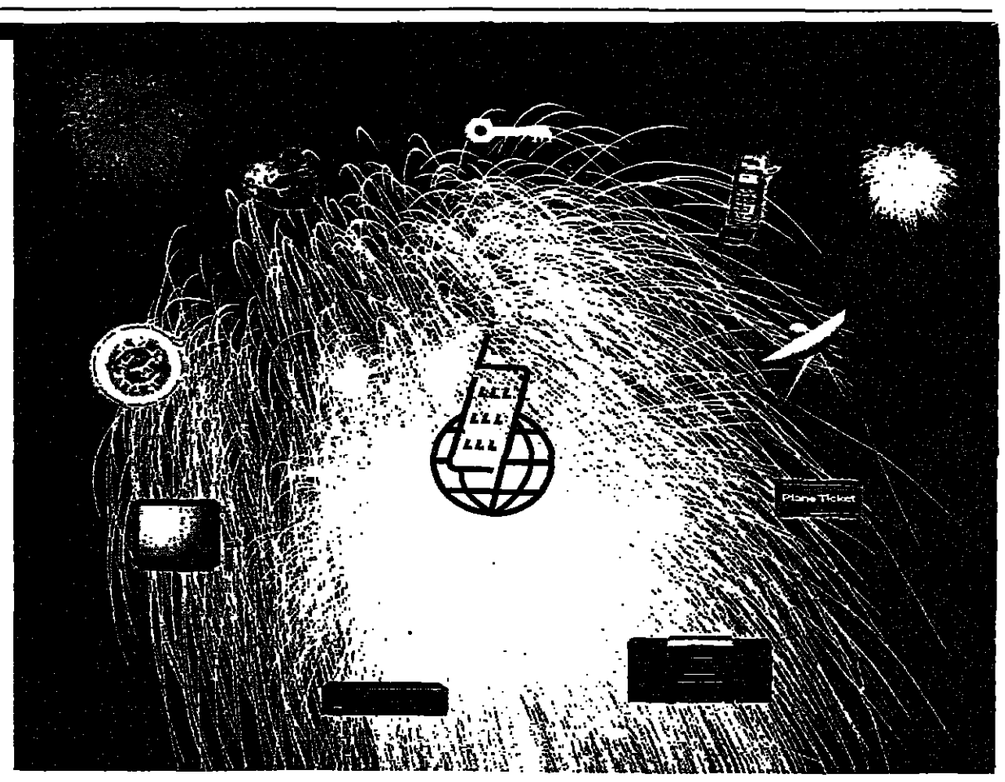
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Romanian trade week to promote economic ties

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordanian Romanian trade week which aims at promoting bilateral relations especially in economic and trade fields will open here today.

Commercial attaché at the Romanian embassy in Amman Onorio Nan said that more than 3000 Romanian businessmen visited Jordan and more than 2000 Jordanian business men visited Romania this year in the course of the two countries endeavours to further strengthen economic ties.

Noting that 2500 Jordanian companies are currently operating in Romania, Mr Nan said that a large number of Romanian firms have been working on Jordan's electric power projects, expanding the Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company in Zarqa, and building vast fuel depots in Aqaba in addition to electricity-related schemes.

In addition, Jordanian investments in Romania have been on the increase and so far 800 projects have been implemented.

Referring to the Jordanian Romanian balance of trade, he said it is now in favour of Romania but Bucharest has been expressing desire to increase imports from the kingdom.

Referring to exchanges of visits by officials from the two countries , Mr Nan said that this year there was a series of visits most notably of which was that made by HRH Prince Abdullah Ibn al Hussein to Bucharest last August

In May of this year a delegation representing the Federation of Jordan Chambers of Trade paid a visit to Romania to discuss promotion of bilateral trade.

U.S. company announces $2-billion India gas project

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — U.S. oil giant Unocal announced plans Tuesday for an estimated $2-billion gas pipeline project for India that would be a component in its "trans-Asia natural gas network."

The "Project Energy Renaissance" would bring gas supplies to West Bengal for industry and power generation from as far east as Burma, where Unocal is developing another pipeline project.

The project calls for pipelines transporting up to 28 million cubic metres (one billion cubic feet) of natural gas per day to industrial centers in West Bengal and nearby areas. These would supply an electric power plant and fertilizer plant, among other things.

It will be developed with Paharpur Cooling Towers Limited and other investors.

"In addition to the benefits to the region, these projects would be crucial links in an evolving trans-Asia pipeline network, in which Unocal expects to be a major participant," said Unocal vice president Boyd Montgomery.

The project was announced in a statement from its U.S. offices and in Calcutta, where Montgomery is part of a U.S. trade mission in India this week with U.S. Commerce Secretary William Daley.

The project is a component in Unocal's planned trans-Asia natural gas network that would include existing and proposed pipelines in Thailand and Burma, as well as proposed pipelines in Central and South Asia.

"Although there's not necessarily a physical connection with every piece (of the pipeline network) it does provide the ability to move gas from resource to market in the region," said Unocal spokeswoman Terry Covington.

Unocal is working on a pipeline from Burma's Yadana field to Thailand, the first cross-border natural gas pipeline in Asia.

In addition, Unocal said it is pursuing plans with other companies to build a new pipeline linking the gas fields in the Gulf of Thailand with industrial customers in northeast Thailand.

It is also heading a consortium that proposes to develop a natural gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to markets in Pakistan and India.

It has invested some five billion dollars in Asia on oil and gas projects.

U.S. urges India to stay on the reform path

NEW DELHI (AFP) — U.S. Commerce Secretary William Daley Wednesday urged India to pursue its market reforms and welcome foreign trade and investment.

The United States "strongly encourages India to stay on the reform path to ... be a part of the extraordinary changes taking place in the global economy," he told a two-day business meeting in Calcutta.

The meeting is also being attended by business leaders from neighbouring Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal.

Daley, midway through a week-long visit to India, said economic liberalisation would be a key element in the economic outlook of South Asian countries, the United News of India (UNI) reported."Economic reforms in this part of the world have unleashed a torrent of energy in the marketplace.

"Deregulation, privatisation and more open markets are creating opportunities for the American companies and improving the living standards of the people," Daley said.

He added that market reforms would be "a long and arduous process."

Daley's comments followed warnings by Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral that New Delhi would pursue its economic liberalisation with caution following the East Asian currency crisis.

The Commerce Secretary announced in New Delhi Tuesday that Indo-U.S. trade was set to exceed $10 billion for the first time.

Illicit Iraqi diesel trade to Turkey is resumed

ANKARA (AFP) — Iraq Wednesday resumed illicit sale of diesel fuel to Turkish trucks that was halted during a crisis between the United Nations and Baghdad last month-U.N., a government official said.

The crisis hit the economy of the south eastern region of Turkey.

"We have agreed with Iraqi officials on the resumption of diesel sales with the old price, and the problem is over," Halil Ulusoy, governor of the border province of Simak, told the state-run Anatolia news agency.

"The trucks began to load diesel this morning," Ulusoy said.

For several years, Turkish truck drivers have taken illicit Iraqi diesel back to Turkey on tanks specially fitted to the side of their vehicles.

In the last two years, they have been taking more than one million tonnes a year worth $200 million. The trade is technically a violation of U.N. sanctions on Iraq in effect since Baghdad's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, but the United States turns a blind eye to the process because it assist the economy of Turkey, an ally.

But during the stand-off with the United States over Baghdad's rejection of U.N. weapons inspections in the country, Iraq in early November halted diesel sales to the Turkish trucks in its oil centre of Mosul in the north.

About two weeks later Iraq decided to resume the sales, but effectively raised the price by nearly 50 per cent.

Owing to the increase, Turkish drivers refused to buy Iraqi diesel. The move resulted in large queues formed by more than 5,000 Turkish trucks waiting for the resumption of sales in northern Iraq.

REUTERS REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates Prices as at 10/12/97 19:06

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.7829	0.6054	1.4436	129.04	1.4229	1745.20	2.0092	5.9690
DE Mark	0.5609	-	0.3393	0.8099	72.39	0.7977	978.25	1.1269	3.3468
GB Sterling	1.6517	2.9452	-	2.3836	213.06	2.3502	2881.33	3.3175	9.8548
CH Franc	0.6927	123.31	0.4183	-	89.36	0.9854	1207.68	139.15	4.1272
JP Yen	0.0077	1.3815	0.4688	1.1184	-	1.1023	13.52	155.66	4.6241
CA Dollar	0.7028	1.2389	0.4197	1.0007	1.10	-	1213.86	1.3963	4.1460
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0208	0.3463	0.0826	1356.20	0.8145	-	11.50	3.4166
NL Guilder	0.4977	88.69	0.3010	71.86	64.16	0.7080	868.54	-	2.9700
FR Franc	0.1675	0.2987	0.1014	24.1785	21.59	0.2383	33.86	33.6600	-

Middle Eastern Currencies

Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7090	3.7505	0.3770	3.6410	0.3049	3.6729	1523.50	3.3950
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	-	5.2898	0.5317	5.1354	0.4300	5.1804	2148.80	4.7884
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1890	-	0.1005	0.97	0.0813	0.98	406.21	0.9052
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8808	9.9491	-	9.66	0.8088	9.74	4041.44	9.0060
Qatar Dinar	0.2746	0.1947	1.0301	1.0301	-	0.0837	1.01	418.43	0.9324
Kuwait Dinar	3.2798	2.3254	12.3008	1.2364	11.94	-	12.05	4996.72	0.9324
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0211	0.1026	0.9913	0.0830	-	414.79	0.9243
Lebanese/1000	0.66	0.4654	2.4618	0.2474	2.3899	0.2001	2.4108	-	2.2284
Egyptian	0.2946	0.2088	1.1047	0.1110	1.0725	0.0898	1.0819	448.75	-

Energy

Oils	Last	Previous
Brent	17.43	17.75
W. Texas	18.42	18.76
Bonny	17.43	17.75
Dubai	16.85	17.05
UL Gas	183.00	185.00

Mid-East Currencies

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2666	0.4757	0.1614	0.38502	34.4163
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.48567	0.16483	0.39314	35.1444
KW Dinar	3.2798	5.85138	1.98531	4.73709	423.37
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.73261	1.60591	3.82995	342.466
CY Pound	1.9082	3.4038	1.1551	2.754	246.197

Metal Prices

Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	286.3	286.8
Silver (oz's)	5.76	5.78
Platinum (oz's)	376.5	378.5
AL (3 Months)	1577	1577.5
CU (3 Months)	1815	1816
Zinc (3 Months)	1141	1142
Lead (3 Months)	533	534
NI (3 Months)	6075	6080

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)

Period C'ncy	-1- Month	-3- Months	-6- Months	-9- Months	-1- Year
USD	5.84	5.81	5.84	5.90	5.96
GBP	7.25	7.59	7.56	7.56	7.56
JPY	0.38	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35
DEM	3.71	3.67	3.80	3.87	4.00
FRF	3.46	3.58	3.73	3.81	3.97
CHF	1.43	1.50	1.75	1.82	1.90
ITL	5.20	5.08	5.70	5.45	5.25

Main Equity Indices

Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pr Cls
NewYork	DOW JONES	8027.78	-21.88	-0.27	8049.42	8010.13	8049.66
Newyork	S&P 500	973.08	-2.7	-0.28	975.78	971.46	975.78
London	FT-SE 100	5117.3	-59.8	-1.16	5177.1	5098.5	5177.1
Tokyo	NIKKIE 225	16478.12	-208.39	-1.25	16676.1	16408.9	16686.5
Paris	CAC 40	2934.76	-24.64	-0.83	2946.97	2915.38	2959.4
Frankfurt	DAX	4117.27	-57.64	-1.62	4178.33	4109.12	4184.91

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1997

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Lately, it may have seemed like your mate has had a chip on his or her shoulder. Well, your dearest friend is beginning to get a sense of humour. Your relationship will transform over the next few days into more of a friendship and less of a battle. It's about time, too.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) It looks like you and your sweetheart have been having a pretty good time lately. Well, now the main person in your life will start making demands. A little of that goes a long way with you. In this case, however, you'd be well advised to comply.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) First thing this morning, there's a hassle. Something you want to do is clashing with something you have to do. Well, that's an easy one to figure out. Later on this evening, the situation changes for the better. Venus goes into Aquarius late tonight, which improves your love life immensely. It'll also make travel much easier.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) You may notice a shift from talking about plans to actually putting them into effect. If you've been thinking about taking out a loan, do it during this phase. Tomorrow should be good for that. Tonight should be good for a double date. Get together with some of your favourite friends and play a game you all enjoy.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You should be luckier with partnerships for the next few weeks. The downside is that your partner may also be a little more flirtatious. You'll have to go along with what the other person wants. This is not necessarily a burden, since your partner is very lucky right now. So you'd be well advised to do as you're told. You might as well relax and enjoy it, too.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You'll have job hassles first thing in the morning. Instead of having this be a barrier, let it be a motivation. Actually, there's no limit on the amount of resources you can generate, remember? That's the theme of your discussion with your true love tonight. Between the two of you, anything is possible.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) It looks like there's not enough money to get something you want for a loved one. Either that, or the loved one wants something, you'll have to endure during the entire season. You will find a good deal on an item for the home, however. When you spot it, gobble it up ASAP. Your luck in love improves late tonight.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Your life gets more complicated this evening. The object of your affections wants a little more say in matters and doesn't simply want to go along with your ideas anymore. You'll see this starting to happen tonight, as resistance pops up. There's no point in worrying about it. You'll make more points if you graciously acquiesce.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You and your team-mates are pushing hard to get a big job done. You're moving along so quickly you hardly have time to worry. You know that other people depend on you, and that's a little frustrating. You don't like that kind of feeling, but that's OK. In this situation, you'll do fine.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You're under pressure, but you've got a good attitude. Make a romantic commitment. This is not a new idea. It might not even be the first time you've committed to this person. If you like to say it every once in a while to keep your love fresh, this is another excellent opportunity.

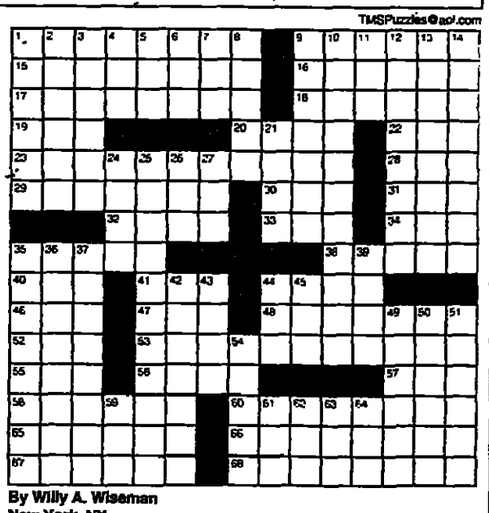
AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You'll notice your attitude improving. That's because you're luckier. Venus will be in your way. What a nice thing to have going on during the holiday season.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Pisces has a notoriously short attention span. Today, however, you'll get deeply involved. That's also true of a conversation you'll be having with your sweetheart tonight. He or she wants to tell you something in private. Listen carefully, but hold off making a decision for a while.

Birthstone of December: Turquoise — Zircon

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

TMSPuzzles@aol.com



ACROSS
1 Crusaders' opponents
9 Savings & Loan institution
15 City where Churchill was imprisoned
16 Mr. Kazootie
17 Past-due notice
18 Smoldering coal
19 Suffix for a follower
20 "A Death in the Family" playwright
22 Out of the bus.
23 A/C controls
28 Botanist Gray
29 Pepys and Goldwyn
30 Obtained
31 Make lace
32 Actress Thompson
33 4 of dates
34 "Telephone Line" grp.
35 Ben, the artist
38 Soft down
40 __ sequitor
41 Back of the bus.
44 Social insects
46 Can. province
47 Japanese drama
48 Ways up
52 Baim-sized
53 Dutch dairy export
55 One of Fred's partners
56 Hoops grp.
57 Shakespearean contraction
58 Humiliated
60 Picks poor players
65 "Don't Sleep in the Subway" singer Clark
66 Addict's end, often
67 Decorous
68 Made more presentable

DOWN
1 Small spars
2 Singer Franklin
3 Cash in
4 Noshed
5 Transmission: abbr.
6 Stretch of time
7 Anais, the diarist
8 Assassinated Middle East leader
9 Christmas star's spot
10 Final phase
11 Stick up
12 Said again
13 Bargain event
14 One with a will
21 Blithering
24 Quicken pace
25 With good intentions
26 Past prime
27 987-65-4321 grp.
35 Mountaintops, often
36 Sweet collector
37 Precede in time
39 Oh yeah, right
42 Around lunchtime
43 Tautog or whitefish
44 Motorists' org.
45 Advisors to the pres.
49 "Schindler's List" star
50 Disease-carrying African pest
51 Intuited
54 Friend of Pythias
59 Totality
61 __ had it!
62 Salton or Caspian
63 TV screen
64 Curb-side refreshment

By Willy A. Wiseman
New York, NY

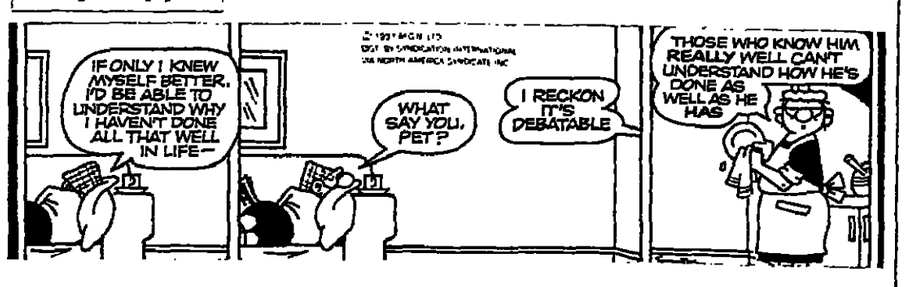
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M	A	R		F	E	D	E	R	A	L	I	S	T	S
		C	L	O	G	S			W	A	N			
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O	U	S	E		H	O	R	N	E		A	C	E	D
O	N	T		M	O	S	E	Y		O	L	I	V	A
F	A	S	C	I	S	T	S		O	R	D	A	I	N
			H	S	T			A	U	R	A	L		
C	A	P	I	T	A	L	I	S	T	S		I	D	O
O	P	U	S		G	O	O	N	S		U	S	E	R
M	E	R	E		E	S	T	E	E		N	T	S	B
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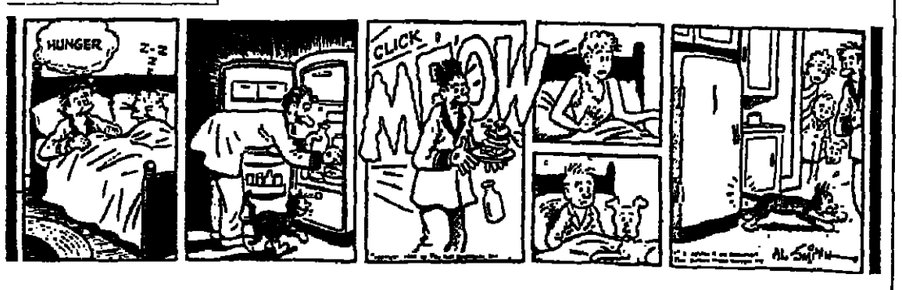
Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



THE BETTER HALF® By Glasbergen



JUMBLE® THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion

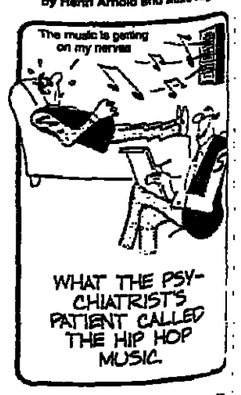
Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

NARCH

KYKIN

STAARY

PRAULB



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print answer here : "_____"

(Answers tomorrow)

Saturday's Jumbles: DRAWL GROIN NUDISM SPONGE
Answer: The result of wearing casual clothes to a formal meeting -- A DRESSING DOWN

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Seoul closes four more merchant banks, forex market paralyzed

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korean financial markets plunged deeper into turmoil Wednesday as four more merchant banks were suspended and the won dived to a new nadir despite a desperate government booster package.

"We are in the middle of an unpredictable forex crisis that has no end," a local bank dealer said, describing the foreign exchange market as in a state of "virtual collapse."

The won hit a new record low of 1,565.90 to the dollar within 38 minutes of the opening bell, diving its daily limit of 10 per cent, while the bond market remained at a standstill.

Trading in the won was suspended after the government unveiled the package designed to pump liquidity into the floundering markets.

Investors, some in tears, shoved riot police outside the newly-suspended banks, which brought the number suspended to 14, almost half of the country's 30 merchant banks.

But there was no violence, and in some cases riot police were seen consoling weeping investors, witnesses said.

Nine troubled merchant banks were suspended on December 2.

Share prices at first surged on announcement of the booster package, only to see the gains wiped out in late morning trade on concern over the won's relentless slide.

But cautious confidence in the package brought select buying in blue chips in the afternoon and the composite index closed up 3.1 per cent at 399.85.

As a part of the package, beleagured finance minister Lim Chang-Yuel lifted a ban on foreign investment in all guaranteed corporate bonds and unguaranteed bonds issued by big business groups.

But Wednesday, the bond market too remained at a virtual standstill, with no buying orders. The benchmark corporate bond yield was up 0.55 percentage points at 25.50 per cent.

Lim also said the stock market would be open to 50 per cent foreign ownership Thursday instead of December 15 as originally planned.

"The government suspended operation at five ailing merchant banks to help stabilize the financial sector and normalize flows of funds," he said.

Seoul, in its agreement with the IMF for a $60-billion bailout programme, has pledged to restructure the banking system.

The banks suspended until January 31 were Daehan Investment Banking Corp., Nara Merchant Bank, Hanhwa Merchant Bank, Chungang Merchant Bank and Shinhan Investment Bank, all headquartered in Seoul.

The suspension of the five was aimed at cutting off the cash-starved ailing merchant banks from the dwindling reservoir of funds and preventing them from cashing commercial papers (CPs).

Those merchant banks, teetering on the verge of bankruptcy, have been gobbling up short-term funds at any price to stay afloat and collecting loans to corporates, raising fears of a further chain of bankruptcies.

The merchant banks were required to submit their rehabilitation plans by the end of this month. If not approved, they would have their licenses revoked. But they were allowed to continue paying foreign debts.

But many analysts saw the package as falling far short of its efforts to contain the financial market turmoil.

"It is not enough, given the current panicky situation in the overall financial system," said Hannuri Salomon's Kwon Oh-Soon, adding the package reflected how serious the situation was.

"I doubt foreigners will actively buy stocks at these risky forex rates," Daewoo Securities dealer Kim Choon-Gon said.

To ease the financial pinch faced by businesses, the government package allowed commercial banks to discount commercial papers or roll them over.

The central Bank of Korea (BoK) will also provide funds to state-owned Kookmin Bank and Housing and Commercial Bank.

The BoK will also help free millions of call loans extended by banks through two funds — one for deposit insurance and the other for writing off bad loans, funded by state bonds worth 24 trillion won ($16 billon).

RSS to study possible new sites for industrial estates

AMMAN (J.T.) —Jordan Industrial Estates Corporation (JIEC) and the Royal Scientific Society (RSS) Wednesday signed an agreement under which the latter will conduct a study for proposed sites where industrial estates in the various parts of the Kingdom will be established.

The agreement was signed for JIEC by its director general Amer Majali, while it was signed for the RSS by its President Said Alloush.

Mr Majali said the RSS will conduct an 8-week study at a total cost of JD 15,000, including JD 5,000 to be covered by the RSS itself, to identify suitable sites for establishing industrial estates. The study will look at various important determinants, including demographic characteristics of the sites, the availability of labour force, proximity from consumer and export markets, ad abundance of economic resources, including agricultural and mineral resources, in addition to existing industries.

The study will also take into consideration the availability of infrastructure of the proposed sites, including the roads, transportation, energy, telecommunications, water and sanitation. The expansion in establishing industrial estates is warranted by the economic opportunities made available as a result of Jordan's signing of the Partnership agreement with Europe, and the imminent accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO), which will create new opportunities ad pose new challenges to the industrial sector.

Hard luck for Hard Rock Cafe

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The Tel Aviv branch of the Hard Rock Cafe has closed because of a slump in tourism that followed anti-Israeli bombings here, company officials said Tuesday.

The local franchise closed its doors last week after losing at least $250,000 in each of the past two years following suicide bombings in early 1996 which killed dozens of people, said Ilana Gadish, financial officer of the Israeli operator of the restaurant.

"Tourists don't want to come here because they are worried about bombings," Gadish told AFP. "When we first opened in 1993, there were so many tourists roaming the streets and now there are a lot less."

The restaurant offering hamburgers and fries in a neon-lit atmosphere of rock music and memorabilia first started losing money after a suicide bombing in March 1996 just outside the cafe killed 13 people.

The attack was part of a slew of suicide bombings by Islamic militants that claimed 58 victims plus four bombers.

Italian daily to sell for $30 to save finances

ROME (AFP) — Italy's independent left-wing daily, Il Manifesto, will be sold on news-stands 30 times more expensively than usual next Friday in an attempt to save its ailing finances.

A special bumper 60-page edition, featuring articles by renowned journalists, will be on sale for 50,000 lire ($30). Il Manifesto usually costs 1,800 lire (approximately $1).

The sale comes as the Italian press is engaged in a circulation war.

Promotion campaigns include video cassettes, books, language courses and other supplements accompanying many daily and weekly publications desperate to boost flagging sales. Luigi Pintor, who founded Il Manifesto in 1971, said he hoped to sell up to 30,000 copies of the special edition.

Shell to open service stations in Croatia

ZAGREB (AFP) — Anglo-Dutch oil giant Shell will open about 40 service stations in Croatia over the next four years, the local press reported Wednesday.

Building work, estimated to cost $70 million , was set to begin next year.

The fuel will be sent from Croatian refineries in Sisak, southeast of Zagreb, and near the port of Rijeka, top Shell official Roy Wiley said, quoted by the daily Vecernji List.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET

HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHMEISANI
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDENSDAY 10/12/1997

	PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	PAST 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE
	346.000	249.000	ARAB BANK	15.2	1.21	11	780	258195	331.00	331.00	-
N	2.340	1.680	JOR.NATIONAL BK.	E	0.00	8	5550	10284	1.84	1.83	.01-
S	3.600	1.830	BANK OF JORDAN	6.0	0.00	2	250	475	2.00	1.90	.10-
	1.190	.890	MID.EAST INV.BK.	74.9	0.00	20	98700	105695	1.11	1.14	.03+
	2.680	2.150	INDUSTRIAL DEV.BK.	10.2	6.13	10	8300	21551	2.60	2.58	.02-
S	4.180	1.850	JOR.KUWAIT BANK	10.4	0.00	3	563	1103	1.96	1.96	-
	1.030	.720	JOR.GULF BANK	4.3	9.72	1	1000	720	.72	.72	-
+S	4.050	2.530	JOR.ISLAMIC BANK	12.5	3.90	6	8000	19934	2.54	2.46	.08-
	1.530	1.110	UNION BK.SAV.INV.	P	0.00	3	2200	2508	1.15	1.14	.01-
	3.900	3.080	JOR.INV.FIN.BANK	24.3	0.00	4	549	2075	3.82	3.78	.04-
S	4.990	2.500	ARAB BANKING CO.	19.9	0.00	1	200	550	2.63	2.75	.12+
	BANK SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 236.42 %CHG: -0.20			69	126092	423090			
+S	1.740	.950	ARABIAN SEAS INSUR.	8.3	0.00	1	250	228	.95	.91	.04-
	2.020	1.590	JOR FRENCH INSUR.	5.5	7.65	1	500	980	1.96	1.96	-
	INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 117.97 %CHG: -0.19			2.	750	1208			
	2.050	1.550	JOR.ELECTRIC PWR.	9.4	5.15	17	10587	20534	1.94	1.94	-
T	3.200	2.450	HIMEH MINERALS	16.4	4.80	1	250	813	3.20	3.25	.05+
	1.550	.930	NATL. PORTFOLIO	g	0.00	8	3410	3747	1.12	1.09	.03-
+	.810	.480	JORDAN INTL.TRAD.	24.1	0.00	2	2500	1175	.48	.47	.01-
	1.680	1.150	MID. EAST HOTELS	19.0	0.00	5	201250	251563	1.25	1.25	-
	3.900	2.890	ARAB INTL.INV.EDUC.	9.7	0.00	2	1030	3840	3.75	3.73	.02-
	1.050	.740	JORDAN EXPAT.INV.	g	0.00	2	2100	1682	.78	.82	.04+
	1.100	.900	ZARKA EDUCATION	g	0.00	2	650	597	.92	.92	-
	2.230	1.630	UNIFIED CO.	8.0	6.55	1	200	336	1.68	1.68	-
	SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 108.04 %CHG: -0.21			40	221977	284286			
	1.150	.930	ATTANQEEB	g	0.00	2	600	690	1.15	1.15	-
	4.450	3.010	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	20.4	3.63	11	2344	7100	3.04	3.03	.01-
	7.050	5.570	ARAB POTASH CO.	14.7	3.17	1	250	1575	6.50	6.30	.20-
	11.160	9.200	JOR. PETROL.REFINARY	10.1	8.54	5	4166	43530	10.46	10.41	.05-
	4.700	3.440	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	11.2	4.94	2	3500	14325	4.08	4.05	.03-
	2.800	1.990	GENERAL MINING	g	0.00	1	100	206	2.17	2.06	.11-
	6.000	4.400	DAR ALDAWA DV.INV.	13.5	4.55	5	2882	15845	5.50	5.50	-
	3.850	2.220	ARAB ALUM.IND.	5.4	10.87	2	1025	2355	2.30	2.30	-
	.690	.450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9.5	0.00	17	16950	7638	.46	.45	.01-
	1.280	.700	NATIONAL STEEL IND.	g	0.00	1	3200	2240	.70	.70	-
	.770	.510	NATIONAL INDS.	g	0.00	2	400	212	.53	.53	-
	1.200	.420	INTERMED.PETRO.CHEM.	g	0.00	12	5600	2377	.42	.42	-
	.890	.530	JOR. SULPHO-CHEM	g	0.00	9	5600	3304	.60	.59	.01-
+S	1.880	.850	UNIV. MODN.INDS.	P	.26	32	35700	30246	.86	.84	.02-
	1.410	.690	JOR.INDS.RESOURCES	9.5	14.08	2	1000	710	.71	.71	-
	2.060	1.340	EL -ZAY READY WEAR	48.6	0.00	7	1338	1843	1.38	1.38	-
	1.200	.860	UNION CH. & VEG.	47.7	0.00	6	1500	1575	1.05	1.05	-
	.810	.710	JORDAN STEEL	33.0	6.85	1	500	365	.73	.73	-
	.840	.570	MID.EAST COMPLEX	7.6	16.13	17	7500	4507	.61	.62	.01+
	INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 115.27 %CHG: -1.52			136	94172	140699			
	GRAND TOTAL		INDEX: 170.02 %CHG: -0.67			247	442991	849282			

PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDENSDAY 10/12/1997

	.620	.410	MACH.EQP.RENT.MAIN.	g	0.00	1	500	250	.51	.50	.01-
	.570	.300	CENTRAL GEN.STORAGE	g	0.00	1	550	182	.33	.33	-
+	.610	.360	JOR.TRADE FAC.	9.3	0.00	9	13000	4550	.36	.35	.01-
	.800	.660	UNION INV. 50%	g	0.00	1	500	110	.72	.72	-
	.570	.360	ARAB FIN.INVEST.	g	0.00	7	15550	6376	.41	.41	-
N	1.000	.720	AL-SHARQ INV.CO.	P	0.00	14	86300	86300	1.00	1.00	-
	.780	.610	AL-DAWLIYAH 75%	66.2	0.00	2	3500	1540	.69	.69	-
N	2.050	1.050	CENTURY INV. GROUP	E	0.00	1	10000	20500	2.05	2.05	-
+	.530	.300	ARAB INTL.INV.TRD.	33.4	0.00	4	1500	445	.30	.29	.01-
	.750	.380	NATL.MULT.ENG.NAMICO	g	0.00	13	39824	16327	.41	.41	-
	.640	.370	NAYZAR DIES & MOULDS	g	0.00	1	200	76	.38	.38	-
	.520	.400	ARAB ELECT.INDS.	g	0.00	1	250	108	.42	.43	.01+
	.660	.580	MIDEAST PHARM. 75%	E	0.00	4	6050	2249	.62	.63	.01+
	1.400	.860	UNION TOBACCO 75%	g	0.00	4	1496	1663	1.40	1.37	.03-
	.730	.550	RAZI PHARM.	E	0.00	25	170314	111207	.65	.66	.01+
	.820	.490	NATL. POULTRY	E	0.00	27	59750	30683	.50	.52	.02+
+N	1.000	.690	MODERN FOOD IND. 75%	E	0.00	2	1500	630	.70	.67	.03-
	GRAND TOTAL					117	410784	283194			

T : New 12 months high
+ : New 12 months low
S : Stock dividend during the past 12 months
N : Listed during the past 12 months
P : P/E ratio is 100 or more
g : Negative P/E
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Graf plans return at Australian Open

MELBOURNE, Australia (AFP) — Germany's former World No.1 Steffi Graf confirmed Wednesday that she would use next month's Australian Open as the platform to re-launch her faltering tennis career.

Graf, a four-time winner of the Australian Open, has been inactive for the latter part of this year through a knee injury and her ranking has slid to 28.

But Australian Open promoters were delighted when her name was on the list when entries closed here Wednesday.

Graf will join defending champion Martina Hingis, four-time winner Monica Seles and American Venus Williams, the U.S. Open finalist, at Melbourne Park from January 19.

Nine of the women's world top 10 have entered with only the Czech Republic's Jana Novotna opting not to play.

The cut-off ranking for players to gain an automatic place in the main draw of the tournament is 113 this year, a record according to officials.

The men's cut-off is 107 and all of the men's top 10 players will contest the event.

Defending champion and world No.1 Pete Sampras and Australia's U.S. Open winner and world No.2 Pat Rafter head the list.



Steffi Graf

Former Australian champion Andre Agassi, who has been battling a career-threatening slump in form, is also expected to make the long trip.

Agassi stands at 110 in the world rankings but has been guaranteed a wildcard entry.

Players will battle for a record prize money pool of A$10 million ($6.8 million) for the January 19-February 1 Australian Open.

Top horse owners threaten to quit British racing

LONDON (AFP) — The biggest spenders in British horse racing over the last 20 years are threatening to move abroad, without fundamental increases in funding for the sport, a report said Wednesday.

Dubai's Sheikh Mohammad and his three brothers, who have spent billions on British horse racing since the late 1970s and own eight stud farms and run eight trainers' yards in the country, attacked racing's organisers, bookmakers and the government in a speech, the Daily Telegraph said.

The family could move to the United States, Australia or Japan, where prize money promises a higher return on investment, the crown prince of Dubai was reported to have said at York racecourse.

"Please be in no doubt that if we see no light at the end of the tunnel, then we will be left with little choice but to make an exit," the sheikh was quoted as saying.

The paper noted that the sheikh had recently given up his controlling stake in the Racing Post, the daily British racing newspaper he has funded since 1985.

The sheikh, and his brothers Sheikh Hamdan Al Maktoum, Sheikh Maktoum Al Maktoum and Sheikh Ahmad Al-Maktoum had about 1,000 horses in training for the last racing season.

2nd Arab Handball Champions Cup

Semifinal round begins today

Jordan's Salt, Arabi play for 5th and 9th places

By Roufan Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The second leg of the 2nd Arab Handball Champions Cup kicks off Thursday with Egypt's Al Ahli playing S. Arabia's Al Ahli and Egypt's Al Olympi meeting the United Arab Emirates' Al Ahli in the semifinals of the ten-team tournament.

Egypt's Al Olympi was the final team to qualify to the semifinal round after overcoming Qatar's Al Rayyan 27-21 (12-7) Wednesday to take a 6 point lead atop Group B.

With teams taking a one-day break, the match was the only one played Wednesday, after it had been halted Tuesday night following a power failure Tuesday at the Sports Palace with Al Olympi leading 12-7 five minute into the second half.

As the match resumed, the two teams played a sensitive match — both looking for a win to qualify.

The match witnessed tough play from the beginning and the two teams tied 6-6 in 18th minute.

Al Olympi put more pressure on Al Rayyan's defence and ended the first half 12-7.

Al Olympi looked more determined to finish a winner and qualify and Al Rayyan could not hold on against their opponent's fast and deadly attacks.

The match ended with 27-21 win for Al Olympi.

Matches deciding 5-10th places begin Friday while the championship concludes Saturday.

At the end of the preliminary round, Egypt's Al Ahli took the Group A lead with 8 points followed by United Arab Emirates' Al Ahli with 6 points as both teams moved to the semifinals.

After losing to UAE's Al Ahli, Jordan's Al Salt finished third in the group and had to settle for playing for fifth and sixth places against Qatar's Al Rayyan.

Group B's fourth placed Kuwait's Al Qadissieh will play Lebanon's Al Sadaqah for seventh and eighth places.

Jordan's Al Arabi came in last place in Group B with only one point from a 35-35 tie with Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli and will now play Qatar's Qatar for ninth and tenth places.

The Jordan Handball Federation has allocated cash rewards for Jordan's two teams in the tourney — Al Salt and Al Arabi: JD 2,000 if they finish third, JD1,000 for fourth place and JD500 for fifth place.

Second round schedule of matches

Semifinals	
Egypt's Al Ahli vs. S. Arabia's Al Ahli	Dec. 11 3 p.m.
Egypt's Al Olympi vs. UAE's Al Ahli	Dec. 11 5 p.m.
9-10th places	
Qatar's Qatar vs. Jordan's Al Arabi	Dec. 12 3 p.m.
7-8th places	
Lebanon's Al Sadaqah vs. Kuwait's Al Qadissieh	Dec. 12 5 p.m.
5-6th places	
Jordan's Al Salt vs. Qatar's Al Rayyan	Dec. 12 7 p.m.
3rd and 4th places (semifinal losers)	Dec. 13 3 p.m.
Final match (semifinal winners)	Dec. 13 5 p.m.

Group A

	P	W	T	L	Gf	Ga	Pts
Egypt's Al Ahli	4	4	-	-	140	91	8
UAE's Al Ahli	4	3	-	1	116	100	6
Jordan's Al Salt	4	1	-	3	91	101	2
Leb.'s Al Sadaqah	4	1	-	3	105	133	2
Qatar's Qatar	4	1	-	3	85	113	2

Group B

	P	W	T	L	Gf	Ga	Pts
Egypt's Olympi	4	3	-	1	131	104	6
S. Arabia's Ahli	4	2	2	-	125	121	6
Qatar's Rayyan	4	2	1	1	108	102	5
Kwt. Qadissieh	4	1	-	3	111	126	2
Jordan's Al Arabi	4	-	1	3	124	147	1

Uruguay to organise mini World Cup

MONTEVIDEO (AFP) — Uruguay are set to invite Argentina, Brazil, Italy to a mini World Cup they hope to host in 2000, while England, Germany and Spain may also take part, the Uruguayan football federation (AUF) said Tuesday.

The Uruguayans want the tournament to form the centrepiece of their federation's centenary celebrations. AUF president and vicepresident of the South American Confederation Eugenio Figueredo suggested the idea to FIFA during the recent under17 World Championship in Egypt.

Back in 1980, Uruguay invited Argentina, Brazil, Germany, Italy and Holland over to mark the 50th anniversary of the first World Cup, which they hosted and won.

Holland replaced England, the only former champions who didn't attend. Although an Italian attempt to host a mini competition was turned down several years ago, FIFA supremo Joao Havelange was set to give the Uruguayan plan the go-ahead.

Announcement

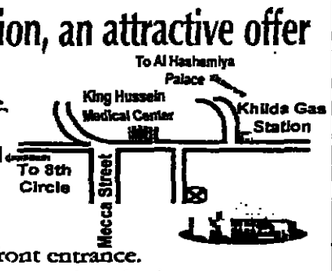
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The Theory Examination will be held on Saturday, 28 February 1998 .

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Bulls beat Knicks as Jordan becomes NBA's 3rd leading scorer

CHICAGO (AP) — Michael Jordan became the third-leading scorer in NBA history Tuesday night, scoring 29 points to lead the Chicago Bulls to a 100-82 victory over the slumping New York Knicks.

Toni Kukoc added 20 points, going 4-for-4 from 3-point range and 6-for-6 overall, in helping the Bulls to their first four-game winning streak this season.

Patrick Ewing scored 22 points for the Knicks, who shot 36 per cent in losing for the fifth time in seven games. New York has lost five straight on the road.

• **Wizards 120, Nets 99:** At Washington, Tracy Murray scored a season-high 26 points and made a career-high seven 3-pointers as Washington stayed perfect at its new arena. Washington has won four straight overall after losing seven of eight.

The Wizards are 4-0 in the week-old MCI Centre after losing all five of their home games at US Airways Arena. Rookie Keith Van Horn had a career-high 23 points to lead New Jersey, which lost for the fourth time in five games after starting 10-5.

• **Hornets 95, Raptors 82:** At Toronto, Bobby Phills scored 13 of his 20 points in the fourth quarter, helping Charlotte extend Toronto's franchise-record losing streak to 17 games.

Phills drove the length of the court for a layup and a 79-72 lead with 4:58 to play, then stole Damon Stoudamire's crosscourt pass and drove for another layup and an 81-72 lead with 4:39 remaining.

Despite being held scoreless in the fourth quarter, Glen Rice finished with 19 points, Anthony Mason had 15 points and 11 rebounds, Vlade Divac added 12 points and 14 rebounds and David Wesley had 11 points.

• **Heat 97, Hawks 81:** At Atlanta, Eric Murdock came off the bench to spark Miami in the fourth quarter and the heat rolled over Atlanta in a matchup of the top two teams in the Eastern Conference.

Miami, leading the Atlantic Division, sliced through an unusually tame Atlanta defence to shoot 51.9 per cent from the field, pulling away in the final period after Atlanta cut a 10-point halftime deficit to 71-66 after the third quarter. Voshon Lenard led the heat with 22 points, P.J. Brown had 20 and Murdock 10.

• **Pistons 92, Nuggets 83:** At Auburn Hills, Michigan, Brian Williams had 21 points and Jerome Williams led a second-quarter comeback with 12 points as Detroit handed Denver its ninth straight road loss.

The Pistons won despite hitting just 34 of 90 shots (37.8 per cent). They redeemed themselves by shooting 23-for-31 at the free throw line and holding Denver to eight points in the second quarter.

Priest Lauderdale scored a career-high 16 points for the Nuggets, who shot 46.8 per cent.

• **Supersonics 108, Timberwolves 99:** At Minneapolis, Gary Payton had 21 points and 11 assists to lead Seattle to its NBA-record 26th consecutive win over Minnesota. Detlef Schrempf scored 19 points and Hersey Hawkins matched a season high with 18 as the Sonics finished a five-game road trip, their longest of the season, by handing Minnesota its eighth loss in 10 games.

Kevin Garnett had 16 points and 15 rebounds for Minnesota, which fell a season-low three games under .500 (8-11). Chris Carr scored 18 for the wolves.

• **Clippers 99, Mavericks 92:** At Dallas, Darrick Martin scored 18 points and Lamond Murray added 17 as Los Angeles won for only the fourth time this season.

Rodney Rogers scored 14 points and Lorenzen Wright had 13 points and 11 rebounds to help the Clippers hold off the Mavericks' fourth-quarter rally.

The Mavericks fell to 1-2 under coach-GM Don Nelson, who took over on the bench after Jim Cleamons was fired last week. Dallas has lost 14 of its last 16.

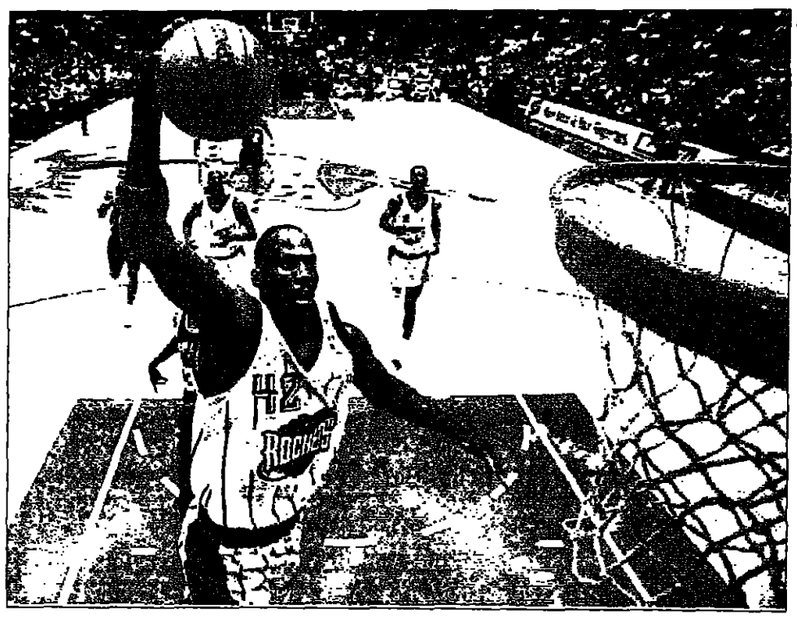
• **Rockets 108, Spurs 78:** At Houston, Clyde Drexler led six players in double figures with 17 points and 11 assists as Houston won its ninth straight.

Kevin Willis added 16 points, Mario Elie had 12 and Matt Maloney shot 4-for-4 on 3-pointers and also scored 12, reserves Eddie Johnson and Rodrick Rhodes added 13 and 10, respectively.

The Rockets broke from a 19-19 deadlock midway through the first quarter and pulled out to a 60-42 halftime lead to send the Spurs on the way to their third straight loss.

• **Suns 107, Grizzlies 85:** At Phoenix, Cedric Ceballos scored 21 points in 23 minutes and Antonio McDyess had 20 points and nine rebounds as Phoenix beat Vancouver. Danny Manning added 14 points for the suns, who are now 6-1 against Western Conference foes.

Shareef Abdul-Rahim had 21 points for the Grizzlies, who lost their third consecutive game and sixth in the last seven. Vancouver has lost 76 straight games in which it has failed to score 90 points dating back to January 1996.



Houston Rockets' Kevin Willis leaps to score a break-away slam against the San Antonio Spurs during first quarter action. The Rockets were hosting the Spurs at the Compaq Center in Houston (Reuters photo)

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SPORTS IN BRIEF

Al Fayed to buy German club

BERLIN (AFP) — Harrods owner Mohammed Al-Fayed is set to buy debt-laden German regional outfit FC Union Berlin, the club revealed on Tuesday. Al Fayed, father of Dodi Fayed, who died in a car crash along with Diana, Princess of Wales last August, already owns English second division side Fulham, coached by former Hamburg star Kevin Keegan. Union Berlin, whose debts total 4.6 million marks (some $2.5 million), are currently fourth in the northeast regional league — effectively a regional third division. Their only honour was an East German cup win in 1968. The German capital already has a first division Bundesliga side in mid-table Hertha Berlin.

Gijon say goodbye to Maceda

GIJON (AFP) — Sporting Gijon on Tuesday sacked Antonio Maceda after a disastrous start to the season which has seen them take just two points from 15 games this season. Maceda, the seventh coach to part company with his team in Spain this season, is replaced by Jose Manuel Diaz Novoa, a club statement said.

Preud'homme may return

BRUSSELS (AFP) — Former Belgian international keeper Michel Preud'homme, 38, said Tuesday he may make a World Cup comeback and try to add to his 58 caps. "I'm not saying I'm thinking seriously about it. But supposing that (coach) Georges Leekens called on me, obviously I'd think about it," the veteran told sports daily La Derniere Heure-Les Sports. "I would never refuse to help my country, especially not when it comes to representing it at the highest level." Although admitting it was unlikely his services would be needed, Preud'homme joked: "You just never know." Preud'homme may find himself back in the reckoning with usual number two Philippe Vande Walle without a club after dissolving his contract with Lierse. Now with Benfica, Preud'homme, Belgian custodian at the 1994 World Cup in the United States, retired in March 1995 from the international scene, giving way to Filip De Wilde of Lisbon neighbours Sporting.

Milan players get driving courses

MILAN (AFP) — AC Milan are planning to send their team on a two-day crash course in advanced driving — after a series of car smashes involving their star players. Both their French midfielders have walked away unhurt from accidents in recent weeks after first Ibrahim Ba wrote off his Mercedes and then Marcel Desailly wrecked his Ferrari. Milan's main striker George Weah escaped injury two seasons ago after writing off his car while returning to France, where the Liberian ace had been living for the previous seven years. Top club official, and former playing star, Daniele Massaro is organising the driving course at the famous Monza race track, home of the Italian Formula One Grand Prix, in March.

Hearts lead, Celtic win 2-0

GLASGOW (AFP) — Hearts stretched their lead at the top of the Scottish Premier Division to two points despite being held to a goalless draw by Dundee United on Tuesday. Celtic, meanwhile, stepped up their title challenge with a 2-0 victory over basement club Aberdeen courtesy of goals from Swedish international Henrik Larsson and Scotland star Darren Jackson. Hearts edged further ahead of second-placed Rangers, who beat Hibernian 1-0 on Sunday, while Celtic stay five points off the pace in third. Larsson put Glasgow giants Celtic ahead after 41 minutes with an angled drive from close range. After 73 minutes Celtic doubled their advantage in a memorable moment for Jackson, who struck his first goal since returning to action since a brain operation earlier in the season, pouncing on a rebound from Regi Blinker's drive. League leaders Hearts were looking to take their winning run to seven with a visit to fourth-placed Dundee United, but were forced to settle for a draw after an even contest at Tannadice Park.



Atletico Madrid's Jordi Lardin (L) battles for the ball with Croatia Zagreb Edin Mujcin during their UEFA Cup third round second leg match at Vicente Calderon stadium (Reuters photo)

Strasbourg adventure ends as Auxerre, Villa, Schalke survive

PARIS (AFP) — Strasbourg's brave tilt at UEFA Cup glory came to an end in the San Siro stadium on Tuesday night when they found a fired-up Inter Milan just too strong for them as they fell 3-0.

Italian league leaders Inter, 2-0 down from the home leg, had evidently decided that going the same way as the backwater French side's earlier victims Rangers and Liverpool would be just too great a humiliation for them.

Ronaldo, who had time to miss a penalty, scored the opener in the 28th minute, Javier Zanetti volleyed the second in the 48th minute and fellow Argentine Diego Simeone finished the Houdini act in the 73rd.

Strasbourg ended up with only 10 men on the field after Jean-Luc Dogon was dismissed for a brutal 83rd minute foul on Ronaldo but with few exceptions, the French side had never been in the match anyway.

Inter, the losing finalists last season, dominated from start to finish and goalkeeper Gianluca Pagliuca was equal to anything the French side had to offer in the penalty area.

Strasbourg goalkeeper Alexandre Vencel was the busiest man on the pitch.

He proved equal to the task initially as Ronaldo missed his chance from the penalty spot, Vencel himself having needlessly tripped Djorkaeff in the area. Ronaldo's spot-kick was parried by the keeper but the ball first hit the post before rebounding into Vencel's arms.

However, the Brazilian made up for his blunder in the 28th minute.

Djorkaeff knocked a free-kick sideways to the Brazilian, who surged forward before unleashing a low 20-yard drive through the French wall and into the corner of Vencel's net.

The one way traffic continued after the restart and Inter's Nigerian defender Taribo West set up the second, feeding Zanetti who blasted home a booming volley which Vencel touched — but couldn't stop.

Strasbourg striker Pascal Nouma might have then grabbed a vital away goal but twice couldn't quite connect with low passes into the box.

After Ronaldo had missed yet more chances at the other end, Simeone notched the inevitable third in the 73rd minute of a match watched by Argentina's national coach Daniel Passarella, chesting down Youri Djorkaeff's pass in a crowded area, beating two defenders and rifling home his left-footed volley.

Lazio made it a double Italian celebration with a 3-0 aggregate win over Rapid Vienna of Austria in Rome.

Auxerre are the last French survivors from an original cast of ten, after beating Twente Enschede 2-0 in France to advance 3-0, Steve Marlet and Stephane Guivarc'h the men on target.

Holders Schalke 04 cruised through with a 2-0 home victory over an outclassed Sporting Braga from Portugal, who had Ze Nuno sent off — by mistake, Sergio the man to pull down Marc Wilmots.

Aston Villa are still carrying the English flag after late goals by Savo Milosevic and Ian Taylor secured a 2-0 win over Steaua Bucharest at Villa Park to give Brian Little's men a 3-2 aggregate victory.

Atletico Madrid booked their berth when Jose-Luis Caminero scored the only goal seconds before the interval at home to Croatia Zagreb to secure a 2-1 aggregate triumph.

Spartak Moscow are also through, but only just after requiring extra time to beat Karlsruhe 1-0 in bitterly cold conditions in the Russian capital.

Alexandr Schirko scored the only goal of the tie ten minutes from the end of extra time to send the 28,000 crowd home happy, if not exactly with a warm glow in their hearts. Ajax face Bochum on Thursday in Germany with the Dutch having a 4-2 lead from the first leg.

Premier League's 14th week

Shabab Al Hussein beat Baqaa

Wihdat face Ramtha Friday

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Eighth placed Shabab Al Hussein scored their third win of the season when they beat bottom-of-the-table Al Baqaa 3-1 as the 14th week of the Premier League Championship kicked off Wednesday.

While the win did not alter the standings, Shabab Al Hussein improved their overall points trying to move away from the relegation-threatened last-two places.

While standings remained unchanged last week, upcoming matches might have a strong impact on the final positions of the ten-team competition which has five weeks to go.

Al Faisali who are second after beating leaders Al Wihdat 2-0, aim to take the lead when they face Al Ahli Thursday.

Al Wihdat, still reeling from their setbacks at the recent Arab Cup Winner's Cup in Tunisia where they suffered a 7-0 defeat to Algeria seem in a struggle to maintain their mere 3-point lead.

The titleholders have came back to an unimpressive form coupled with the sudden departure of their coach Anwar Jassam.

They could only manage a 1-0 win over Shabab Al Hussein in their last match and they will next face third place Al Ramtha Friday in what is expected to be a tough test that might determine the title hopes of the top three teams.

Al Ramtha had tied fourth placed Al Hussein 1-1 last week and now hope that Al Wihdat will be an easy prey in the most awaited match of the week.

In other matches , Al Qadissieh who have slipped to 7th face 9th place Karmel while 4th place Al Hussein aim to improve their record when they meet Al Jazireh.

Al Jazireh beat Al Qadissieh 2-1, while Al Ahli beat Al Karmel 4-1 last week.

Al Wihdat are hoping to win the second title of the year after winning the Cup Winners Cup at the onset of the season. Al Faisali won the Federation Shield.

The fourth title of the year— the Jordan Cup — will see Al Ramtha who knocked out Al Faisali playing the winner of Al Hussein-Al Wihdat semifinal which has not yet been scheduled.

STANDINGS

Team	P	W	D	L	Gf	Ga	Pts
Wihdat	13	11	1	1	29	5	34
Faisali	13	10	1	2	37	11	31
Ramtha	13	7	4	2	24	15	25
Hussein*	12	6	3	3	24	20	21
Jazireh	13	5	2	6	19	23	17
Ahli*	12	4	4	4	24	23	16
Qadisieh	13	3	3	7	14	20	12
S.Hussein	14	3	3	8	17	26	12
Karmel	13	2	2	9	13	37	8
Baqaa	14	2	1	11	12	33	7

Ahli-Hussein have a postponed match

Schedule

Faisali-Ahli	Thurs. Dec. 11	Amman Stadium
Qadissieh-Karmel	Fri. Dec. 12	Salt Stadium
Hussein-Jazireh	Fri.Dec. 12	Hassan Stadium
Wihdat-Ramtha	Fri. Dec. 12	Amman Stadium

AC Milan strike fear — Capello

MILAN (AFP) — AC Milan coach Fabio Capello claimed on Wednesday that his side are once again striking fear into the hearts of their rivals.

Milan, who ruled European football for nearly a decade, have recovered after their worst start to a season since 1938, which itself followed their worst finish to a season in more than a decade.

Two draws against the top two sides of the Serie A, Inter Milan and Juventus, and two consecutive victories against Brescia and Bari have now propelled the club to eighth place in the table.

"We are proud to be back as a team to beat, a team that everyone should be afraid of," Capello trumpeted. "We are in a pursuit race and I'm not settling for anything."

Capello, who is back after a championship-winning spell with Real Madrid last season, had previously guided Milan to four league titles during his five years in charge here before leaving for Spain.

"We have shown that we've got backbone once again, and that we're playing the kind of football we used to play," he maintained.

Looking over the recent improvements, the coach said: "The important thing is to keep the defence tight, and as far as that's concerned we haven't given much away. That means that things are solid."

The midfield machine is ticking over nicely and Capello again defended his struggling Dutch striker Patrick Kluivert, who scored only his second goal this season against Bari last weekend.

The club are nevertheless on the lookout for another striker, and are hoping for Maurizio Ganz. Inter Milan's top scorer last season has lost out since coach Gigi Simoni chose France's Youri Djorkaeff to partner Ronaldo.

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EU defeats Palestinian attempt to upgrade U.N. mission status

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — The Palestinians failed to muster support Tuesday for upgrading their U.N. observer status amid charges that such a move would mean virtual recognition of a Palestinian state.

The setback for the Palestinians, who traditionally obtain strong U.N. support on Middle East issues, came as the U.N. General Assembly met to vote on a draft resolution proposed by the Arab group as part of its annual Mideast debate.

If approved, the resolution would have given the Palestine observer mission the same rights as U.N. member states, except for voting rights and the power to put forward candidacies for U.N. posts.

The European Union (EU) and Palestinians had attempted to agree on a compromise position since the General Assembly last Wednesday decided to postpone voting until Tuesday, amid strong disagreements on how to proceed.

The 15 EU members last week put forward an amendment seeking to delay a decision by asking U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan to produce a report on the legal implications.

But after failing to reach agreement behind the scenes Tuesday, the Palestinians insisted on moving to a vote, while the European Union in turn presented its "killer" amendment.

Arab states objected to the European amendment, however, and said that it should be presented as a separate motion as it was in total contradiction with the Palestinian draft.

The General Assembly vote on whether to consider the EU amendment as a separate proposal highlighted the divisions in the assembly, and prompted Egypt to call for a postponement of a decision on the Palestinian upgrade, fearing defeat.

In the technical vote, 65 delegations agreed that the EU text should be an amendment, while 57 shared the Palestinian view that it should be an alternative motion. A total 32 abstained.

"An actual coalition formed between Israel, the United States, the European Union, Russia and a large number of developing countries who are simply sick and tired of seeing the U.N. abused for Arab-Israeli boxing matches," said Israeli envoy Dore Gold.

Following the procedural vote, Egyptian ambassador Nabil Elaraby consulted with other co-sponsors of the Palestinian resolution.

Fifteen minutes later, he declared that "it was considered appropriate at this stage to request that the draft not be put to the vote."

Sponsors of the draft said afterwards that consultations would continue with the Europeans, and that the draft resolution had not been withdrawn.

The Palestinian observer to the United Nations, Nasser Al Kidwa, denied that the Palestinians had failed in the General Assembly.

"Tactically it was a step aside, to allow more time for discussion with the Europeans," he said.

Qatar ambassador Nasser Ben-Hamad Al Khalifa told AFP that he felt there had been a "misunderstanding" among many delegations because of the procedural vote.

But Mr. Gold said that "in this particular test of strength, the Palestinian observer mission took a major loss today."

Peter Burleigh, U.S. deputy permanent representative, angrily denounced the proposal, saying: "the Palestinians are not a state and should not have rights in the General Assembly nearly equal to those of states."

Mr. Burleigh, and other delegates, expressed fears that at a time of U.S. attempts to steer the Middle East peace process back on track, a General Assembly vote could have affected events on the ground.

"This is not the time to take precipitate actions which may appear merely symbolic to those in this hall, but could have very real and very negative repercussions to the negotiations now going on," he said.



DRESSED UP FOR XMAS, KITTEN CHEERS UP SICK CHILDREN: A tiny kitten, wearing a Christmas cap, gets a ride to the Blank Children's Hospital in Des Moines, Iowa, in a Hubbell Vet Clinic technician's pocket, to visit hospitalised youngsters. An adult cat and three dogs also made the trip (AP photo)

Far right says Netanyahu froze Jerusalem settlement project

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli nationalists accused Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu Wednesday of ordering a halt to construction of a new Jewish neighbourhood in Arab east Jerusalem which has been a major cause of crisis in the peace process.

Mr. Netanyahu ordered ground broken on the project in March, sparking a breakdown in peace negotiations with the Palestinians, and the infrastructure work was completed two months ago.

Since then the housing ministry has been expected to issue tenders for construction of units in Jabal Abu Ghneim, a hilltop on the southeastern edge of Jerusalem called Har Homa by Israelis.

Far right nationalists in parliament complained Wednesday that Mr. Netanyahu had frozen the tenders under pressure from the U.S., which has demanded a freeze in Jewish settlement building in disputed areas.

"He is trying to please the Americans," said Michael Kleiner, who heads a group of nationalist deputies from the ruling coalition known as the "Greater Israel Front" which has threatened to topple Mr. Netanyahu if he cedes any more land to the Palestinians.

The Haaretz newspaper also reported Wednesday that Mr. Netanyahu had instructed the housing ministry to hold back the tender offer.

Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert — a fierce supporter of Jewish settlement in the Arab east of the city — told Israel Radio he would "check these rumours with the prime minister."

Mr. Olmert, a member of Netanyahu's Likud Party, threatened to join the Greater Israel Front and vote to oust the government if work at Jabal Abu Ghneim was halted.

A spokesman for Mr. Netanyahu insisted that "work is proceeding normally" on the housing project.

And a housing ministry spokesman, Moshe Friedman, denied that the tender offer had been postponed.

"We always said that the tender offers for construction at Jabal Abu Ghneim would be published during the first quarter of 1998," he told AFP.

The Israeli press said initial plans had been to make the tender offers on Dec. 1.

Israel drew international condemnation for launching the settlement in Jabal Abu Ghneim, which ultimately should provide 6,500 units for Jews on land claimed by the Palestinians for their future state.

Under interim peace agreements, Israel is required to negotiate the future of Arab east Jerusalem, which it occupied in 1967.

The Palestinians, backed by Washington, claim that Jabal Abu Ghneim and other Jewish settlement building in Arab areas are designed to extend Israeli control over occupied land to influence the outcome of future negotiations on a permanent peace agreement.

Albright vows to 'isolate' Sudanese government

KAMPALA (AFP) — U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on Wednesday met Sudanese opposition and rebel leaders in Kampala, where she said that Washington was seeking to isolate Khartoum's government, accused of backing terrorism.

Ms. Albright, in Uganda during an African tour, held talks with the head of the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), John Garang, and three other leaders in the opposition National Democratic Alliance (NDA), which linked up with Colonel Garang in 1995.

The meeting was the first between a U.S. government representative and the SPLA and also the first at such a senior level between Washington and the largely exiled opposition to the Islamist-backed military junta.

After talks with Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and before meeting the Sudanese, Ms. Albright said that Washington wants "to isolate the Sudanese regime and contain its ability to support terrorism and destabilise its neighbours."

A U.S. official, who asked not to be named, said that Ms. Albright planned to stress Washington's concern for continued unity within the ranks of the Sudanese opposition, in order to encourage a credible alternative to President Omar Al Bashir.

Ms. Albright said in Kampala that the opposition and the rebels were "trying to lay the groundwork for a new Sudan in which people of all faiths and cultures can focus on rebuilding the country."

Iraq derides UNSCOM team of arms experts for inspecting kindergarten

'Seems UNSCOM prepared this important inspection to prepare for Butler's visit'

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq on Tuesday scoffed at U.N. inspectors for carrying out a search for weapons of mass destruction in a kindergarten in Baghdad as the startled youngsters looked on.

"A team of experts in ballistic, chemical and nuclear weapons conducted a surprise inspection in a kindergarten to assure themselves about the number of long-range missiles hidden under the desks and the atomic bombs and chemical warheads in the children's bags," said a spokesman for Iraq's information ministry.

A team of five groups of experts conducted the inspection, despite a sign saying it was a kindergarten, said General Hussam Mohammad Amin, the director of Iraq's national surveillance organisation, the counterpart to the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) on disarming Iraq.

The search "stunned the children and their supervisors," said Mr. Amin, accusing UNSCOM of being "influenced by the allegations of U.S. intelligence agents hostile to Iraq who claim the existence of weapons and prohibited products."

Iraq's comments come ahead of a visit Friday by UNSCOM Chairman Richard Butler for talks with Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz.

"It seems that UNSCOM has prepared this important inspection to prepare for the upcoming visit of its chief Richard Butler and to confirm its theories that Iraq continues to produce prohibited arms in several sites, including the kindergarten at Qotr Al Nada, in Baghdad," the ministry spokesman said.

Iraqi television broadcast a one-minute-long film showing three U.N. experts walking in the classroom, watched by a dozen children and their teacher.

Mr. Butler's visit will be the Australian diplomat's first since Iraq triggered a crisis on Oct. 29 by threatening to expel U.S. inspectors working for the Special Commission.

UNSCOM has carried out daily inspections without incident since Nov. 22, after Iraq dropped the ban on U.S. inspectors which led to a three-week break in the commission's work.

But they have not tried to inspect sites which Iraq says are sensitive for its national sovereignty and security.

Under U.N. resolutions, sanctions imposed on Iraq after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait can only be lifted when the U.N. arms inspectors certify that it has dismantled all nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, and long-range missiles.

Israel demolishes Palestinian home in Arab east Jerusalem

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israeli police demolished a Palestinian home in the Shuafat refugee camp in Arab east Jerusalem on Wednesday as part of a campaign against "illegal" Arab construction in the city, officials said.

A large number of police were deployed to prevent incidents during the demolition.

A spokesman said the home had been built without proper authorisation.

A recent report by the Israeli municipality claimed that 800 homes had been built without permits since the beginning of the year in nine Arab neighbourhoods of east Jerusalem.

Palestinians reply that the Israeli occupation authorities ignore most demands for construction permits and they have no choice but to build illegally to accommodate growing families.

Only 7.1 per cent of the land surface in Arab east Jerusalem — which covers 75 square kilometres — has been set aside for Arab housing and building permits limit homes to two stories.

About 160,000 Arabs live in east Jerusalem, alongside 170,000 Israelis who have settled there with state aid since the sector was occupied by the Jewish state in 1967.

During the 30 years of occupation, the government has built 40,000 homes for Jews but only 600 for Palestinians.

The world community has refused to recognise Israel's sovereignty over Arab east Jerusalem, which the Palestinians hope to make the capital of a future state.

Under interim peace accords, Israelis and Palestinians are due to negotiate the future of Jerusalem, but Israel has ruled out any re-division of the city.

Turkish troops withdraw from northern Iraq

DIYARBAKIR (AFP) — Some 2,000 Turkish soldiers have pulled out of northern Iraq after conducting a seek-and-destroy operation against Turkish Kurd separatists based over the border, a military official said here Wednesday.

The troops, who were part of a reportedly larger force of 20,000 men which entered Iraq Thursday night, were forced to give up their hunt for Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) rebels because of heavy snowfall, the source said.

Although the Turkish interior ministry said Friday it sent 20,000 soldiers into Iraq against PKK bases, that figure has been contested by diplomats in Ankara who say no troop movements on that scale had been sighted.

The incursion was Turkey's third this year. As in the two previous times, in May and in September-October, the Turkish forces were backed up by the Kurdistan Democratic Party, the main rivals of the PKK.

Journalists have been barred from entering northern Iraq since May.

The PKK, which has been fighting for an independent Kurdish state since 1984, has been using northern Iraq as a refuge ever since the end of the Gulf war prohibited Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's airforce from flying over the region.

Seize your rights, United Nations chief tells Iranian students

TEHRAN (AP) — Seize your rights, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan told Iranians in Tehran on Wednesday.

Speaking at Tehran University, Mr. Annan called human rights "the ideals of hope and humanity." But he did not tell his listeners how to win their rights, nor mention U.N. criticism of the Iranian government over human rights violations.

"Human rights are your rights. Seize them. Defend them. Promote them," Mr. Annan said in his 30-minute speech to students and faculty at Iran's oldest university.

"It is for you to realise these rights, now and for all time," said Mr. Annan, who is in Iran to attend a summit of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference along with leaders of the Muslim World.

In a speech that quoted thinkers from Thomas Jefferson to Imam Ali — a revered figure among Iran's Shiite Muslim majority — Mr. Annan noted that the very first U.N. world conference on human rights took place in Tehran thirty years ago.

But as he spoke in the small university auditorium, women were not allowed to sit next to men as is usual in public places. Questions after his speech had to be submitted in writing and were screened by an Iranian official.

The United Nations has been critical of Iran's human rights record since its 1979 Islamic revolution.

Last month, a U.N. report said executions in Iran doubled from 1995 to 1996 and may double again this year. In the report, special investigator Maurice Danby Copithorne spoke of "troubling reports of disappearances and deaths under suspicious circumstances" and said "public hanging also appears to be on the increase."

Iran also has been criticised for discriminating against religious minorities such as the Baha'is, who are not allowed to practice their religion. The faith has about 5 million followers in 100 countries: An offshoot of Islam, it was founded in Iran in the 19th century.

Iran has consistently denied allegations of human rights violations, claiming criticism against it results from a cultural bias by Western societies.

Iranians place great hope that Mohammad Khatami, a moderate cleric who became President in August, will follow through on promises of greater liberty. Iranians hope he will loosen the dress code for women, broaden freedom of speech and leave them free to do what they want inside their homes.

A political science student, who heard Mr. Annan's speech from one of the special rows for women and identified herself only as Ziba, said the U.N. leader's words were inspiring but unrealistic.

"How does one seize her rights like Mr. Annan suggested?" she asked. "When the speech ended and I looked around I was still a woman in a country run by men. How should I insist on my rights?"

Women and young Iranians, chafing under Iran's strict Islamic rules, overwhelmingly voted for President Khatami last May, inspired by his message of tolerance, equality of the sexes and respect for human rights.

President Khatami has appointed three women to key positions in his government, he was widely expected to name a women to a cabinet post, but did not. To a degree, the women's dress code has been relaxed and press freedom has been extended since President Khatami took office.

"The human rights situation in Iran has been grave, but things have improved marginally under Khatami," said Said Neshat, spokesman for a group called the Organisation for Defending Victims of Violence.

"I have a lot of things I can say about the human rights situation in Iran, but I must be careful because I don't want authorities to close us down. That would accomplish nothing," he said.

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Americans to name U.S. First Dog

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Indecision or just plain love of democracy? President Bill Clinton wants Americans to choose a name for a three-month chocolate-coloured Labrador puppy dog that he decided to keep after it visited the White House. Insiders have suggested "Shoes" as a fine complement to First Cat Socks, but the Clintons do not seem amused, said White House spokeswoman Joe Lockhart. So Clinton decided to let it be the people's choice. Suggestions should be mailed to Name That Dog, care of The Washington Post daily. In the meantime, the unnamed puppy will not be admitted to the presidential quarters until he is White-house trained, the daily said.

Girl finds pre-historic fly in amber ring

LONDON (AFP) — A British student was astonished when she found that a simple amber ring she bought at a market contained a fly estimated to be 40 million years old, university sources said. Tests at Leeds University in northern England, had determined the age of the insect and showed it to be of the Heleomyzides type, the sources said. Scientists said such a discovery was a very rare event. The student, Catherine White paid $20 dollars for the ring.

Puppies improve quality of life — Japan's Crown Princess

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan's Crown Princess Masako praised her two puppies for improving her life. "The crown prince adores them too. The dogs made our everyday life more calm and relaxed," the princess told a news conference marking her birthday. She said the couple raised the puppies after a stray dog gave birth to them in Akasaka Palace, their Tokyo residence. Princess Masako and her husband, Crown Prince Naruhito, have no children after more than four years of marriage, a topic considered too sensitive to touch on in her rare appearances in front of the media.

Coyote slips into Seattle office building

SEATTLE (AFP) — Guards are used to all sorts of characters trying to slink past them at the federal building here but nobody was prepared when a young coyote dashed inside the front doors. The disoriented trespasser eluded capture by darting down a corridor and into a waiting elevator. No one else was inside. Guards shut down the elevator and called for help. Two hours later, animal control experts lowered a blanket over the canine and scooped it up in a dog carrier. The coyote was later released in a rural area far from the city's taxis and throngs of Christmas shoppers.

Doe, two fawns helped out of Swedish hotel

VAESTERAAS (AFP) — A doe and her two fawns were unexpected guests at a hotel in Vaesteraas overnight, but they quickly found their natural habitat preferable to marble floors and soft furniture. Police inspector Bengt Ottervald, a veteran hunter, was called to the hotel when the deer were found, trembling with fear, in a corner of a second-floor ballroom after apparently climbing the central stairway. Ottervald said he "talked gently" to the animals, guided all three to the door and watched as they bounded off into the countryside.